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AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF FRENCH AND GERMAN

IN EMPLOYMENT AND LEISURE

BY HOLDERS OF 'A' LEVEL PASSES IN THESE TWO LANGUAGES

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# AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF FRENCH AND GERMAN IN EMPLOYMENT AND LEISURE BY HOLDERS OF 'A' LEVEL PASSES IN THESE TWO LANGUAGES

The intention of this enquiry was to survey, by means of a postal questionnaire, a sample of holders of 'A' level passes in French and/or German for the years 1967-70. The main aims were to see how they had subsequently used their French and/or German in employment and/or leisure, and to compare this use with the language skills required in the 'A' level modern language syllabuses.

The sample consisted of 573 men and women to whom a questionnaire consisting of 27 questions was sent. A response rate of 55% was obtained. Since there are approximately twice as many female 'A' level language candidates as male, a weight of two was applied to the women, giving a total weighted sample of 452 respondents.

The questionnaire covered questions on foreign language acquisition, further education, the use of French and/or German in both employment and leisure, and included an open ended question requesting comments.

The results show that approximately less than a quarter of the respondents were using their 'A' level French in employment and well over a third were using their German. Of those, over two thirds had continued with some form of post 'A' level study. The most common occupation using French and/or German was teaching.

The most frequently used language activities were :

- (i) in employment : reading, interpreting from the foreign language, conversation
- (ii) in leisure : conversation, reading, watching TV or films.

The Free Comments by respondents showed :

- (i) a concern for oral communication and the lack of its importance in the French and German 'A' level examinations;
- (ii) a desire to use languages in employment;
- (iii) the usefulness of the languages on holiday.

It is concluded that there was a mismatch between the language skills tested in the French and German 'A' level examinations, and those actually used in employment or leisure. Oral skills in particular seemed undervalued in the examinations.

Keith Emmans



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## CHAPTER ONE

### Research into the needs for and uses of foreign languages

#### Aims of the enquiry

Pupils and students who pass 'A' level foreign language examinations have, to a certain extent, specialised in foreign language study. In most instances they will have spent two years preparing for the examinations after having passed the 'O' level examinations. In the case of French this will probably have involved a five year course and for German a slightly shorter period of study. Therefore the holders of 'A' level passes in French and German will have been studying these languages for up to seven years. The extent to which they subsequently use the 'A' level language skills they have acquired is unknown. Research in the U.K. into the use of language skills acquired from formal study has so far been restricted to language graduates. The present enquiry was, therefore, undertaken to establish what use holders of the most common 'A' level languages had made of their language skills in either leisure or employment. This research was intended to fill a genuine gap in our knowledge. The information obtained could have a bearing on the debate on the content of sixth form foreign language studies.

#### Previous work in the field

International research into the foreign language needs of commerce, industry, government departments and academic education and research is quite extensive. It is well documented with over 100 references for the years 1965-80 by Oud de Glas M. (1982) ("Foreign language needs - A survey of research", Nijmegen, Institute for Applied Sociology). However, there is relatively little research into the use that former foreign language students have actually made of their languages. Nevertheless, such students are the ones

to judge whether the language teaching they have had meets the needs they experience after they have completed their studies.

A very thorough scan of the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Centre, Washington) bibliography surprisingly revealed no parallel literature in this field of enquiry. Lambert (1982) of the University of Pennsylvania in his "Survey of language skill needs in the United States" (Augsburger Schriften Volume 29 "Research into foreign language needs", Augsburg University (1983)) states that to his knowledge there are no studies of the use by American adults in general or by members of specific occupations or professions of the foreign language skills learned in school.

Any recent research into students and foreign language learning has been, very largely, concerned with student motives and attitudes to learning foreign languages and student estimates of the likely usefulness in the future of the languages learned, as in the case of Schröder & Macht "Wieviele Sprachen für Europa ?" Augsburg University. Ferher, Ager, Clavering and Galleymore (1978) in "Foreign languages in industry, commerce and education - The Aston experience", give an overview of the modern language learning provision in the education system and make comparisons with their survey of foreign language provision and use in Leyland International, but there is no enquiry into the exact use former students made of their languages after completing their studies.

A distinction needs to be drawn between foreign language needs and foreign language use. Research into needs is more hypothetical than attempting to measure the amount of actual use of foreign languages. Needs research asks for an element of speculation as to what is thought to be required. It is difficult to quantify any perceived needs. Actual use is more susceptible to measurement.

Research into the use in employment that graduates had made of their foreign languages formed about a third of the enquiry in Emmans, Hawkins and Westoby (1974) "Foreign languages in industry and commerce",

York University. Three separate samples of modern foreign language graduates were surveyed by postal questionnaire. This enquiry examined the type and extent of use they had made of their languages acquired either during their studies or subsequently, as well as the context in which the languages were used. Leisure use of languages was excluded.

The most direct parallel enquiry is that conducted by Claessen, van Galen and Oud de Glass (1978) "Foreign language needs in the Netherlands" (De Behoeften aan moderne vreemde talen) Institute for Applied Sociology, Nijmegen, published in six parts. This enquiry researched into the needs for foreign languages in (i) leisure and (ii) study situations, as well as those connected with (iii) professional activities. This project investigated by means of questionnaires twenty-four language use situations divided into three groups of eight for each of the three possible areas of use, and limited the survey to the three most widely taught languages in Holland : French, German and English. This wide-ranging study encompassed 600 schools where 3,000 examination candidates and 1,850 school leavers completed questionnaires. Two other complementary surveys were conducted : one of students and staff in colleges and universities, and a smaller survey of employees in companies and the civil service. This section of the enquiry sought to discover from former pupils the kinds of situations in which French, German and English were needed, the frequency of their use, where their knowledge of these languages was inadequate. The difference between the expectations of future use by examination candidates was compared with the actual experience of former pupils.

Significant findings showed that German and English were used more than French, with English the most widely used. The ability of students to cope with situations was greater with English and German than with French.

Design of the investigation

At the time of the design of this survey, little was known about holders of 'A' levels in French and German, apart from the numbers who had achieved passes in these examinations (See Table 1) and the fact that some pursued their language studies in Further or Higher Education up to degree level.

This first category of holders of 'A' levels in languages, who had subsequently obtained language degrees, had been surveyed by the York University enquiry: Emmans, Hawkins and Westoby (1974) "Foreign Languages in Industry and Commerce". However, this enquiry was restricted to the use of languages in employment.

For a second category, those who went on to Further or Higher Education to study subjects other than foreign languages, little was known of the extent or type of use of their residual 'A' level language skills.

Similarly for a third category of 'A' level holders of languages i.e. those who went straight into employment without further study, nothing was known of their subsequent use of their 'A' level foreign language skills.

It was realised that this current enquiry would necessarily include some of the same type of students in the preceding first category i.e. those who graduated in foreign languages and who had formed part of the York enquiry. However, the intention was to break new ground by surveying their leisure use of languages.

The overall aim, then, was to identify the type and extent of use, if any, that holders of 'A' levels in French and German made of these languages in employment and leisure; and whether or not they had supplemented their language skills by further study. Once the areas, extent and type of language use had been identified the next step was seen as discovering which factors, if any, seemed to be significant in determining the use these young people had made of their French and German.

It was, for example, likely that there would be differences in the extent, type and context of language use:



- (i) between men and women (a) because of differences in their types of employment and (b) because of the different demands that marriage and family commitment made on the two sexes.
- (ii) between those with and those without further language study.
- (iii) between those with higher and those with lower grades of achievement in the 'A' level examinations.
- (iv) between those who had spent a significant period of residence abroad in a French or German speaking country and those who had not.
- (v) according to whether the language used was French and German.
- (vi) according to the level of competence in the languages that the respondents reported they had.

The 27 questions contained in the questionnaire (see appendix) included questions relating to the preceding areas of enquiry. Other questions sought to elicit information on the relative importance attached to the various language skills both in employment and leisure.

One question, seeking information on the respondents' place of residence, whose aim was to find out whether there was a geographical factor involved in language use proved, in the event, not to yield any worthwhile information.

The decision to conduct the enquiry up to ten years after the potential respondents had passed their 'A' level examination, meant that an adequate amount of time had passed for them to have been in employment for a useful period of time, without the time lapse being too great for it to be possible to contact a sufficient proportion of them.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The sample and the technical conduct of the data collection

The resources available for this enquiry were very limited and its scope would therefore also have to be limited. The foreign languages most commonly taught to 'A' level, in English and Welsh secondary schools, were and are: French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian. The statistics of 'A' level entries show that French is by far the most frequently studied. The entries for languages at 'A' level suggested that, if a sample of candidates from a limited number of schools were taken, the 'A' level entries for the less common languages would not produce enough respondents clustered in these schools.

The total numbers of passes by male and female candidates at the 'A' level Summer examinations in England and Wales (Department of Education and Science Statistics) in the more commonly taught modern foreign languages for the years from which the samples were to be taken were as follows:

Table 1

*Passes by male and female candidates at the 'A' level Summer examinations  
(1967-70) in England and Wales*

	Year	Women	Men	Total
French	1967	11,103	7,415	18,518
	1968	11,590	7,391	18,981
	1969	11,505	7,023	18,528
	1970	11,630	6,419	18,049
German	1967	3,096	2,515	5,611
	1968	3,362	2,672	6,034
	1969	3,314	2,359	5,673
	1970	3,418	2,226	5,644
Spanish	1967	1,027	905	1,932
	1968	1,127	913	2,040
	1969	1,121	835	1,956
	1970	1,211	786	1,997
Italian	1967	368	189	557
	1968	394	181	575
	1969	459	264	723
	1970	497	223	720
Russian	1967	279	302	581
	1968	312	321	633
	1969	327	287	614
	1970	310	309	619

The difference in the number of 'A' level passes in Italian, Russian, Spanish and German and that of the most popular language : French expressed as an average % over the four years 1967-70 was as follows :

Proportion of : Italian 'A' level passes to French	3%
Russian 'A' level passes to French	3%
Spanish 'A' level passes to French	10%
German 'A' level passes to French	31%

French, German and Spanish alone are taken by more than 1,000 candidates per year. It was initially decided to cover candidates with a pass at 'A' level in these three languages. However, at an early stage in the design of the sample a decision was made to concentrate on the most commonly learnt languages : French and German, since sufficient numbers of 'A' level holders of French and German were likely to be clustered in a relatively small number of schools. Conversely an insufficient number of Spanish 'A' level holders would be located in such a limited sample.

This also meant that we would be surveying the two most commonly used foreign languages in employment, according to Emmans, Hawkins and Westoby (1974) "The use of foreign languages in the private sector of industry and commerce", York University, which ranked the first five foreign languages used in order of importance as :

1. French
2. German
3. Spanish
4. Italian
5. Russian

### The survey design

It was estimated that an enquiry, up to ten years after the respondents had passed their 'A' level examinations, would ensure that they had completed any further or higher education studies and had entered employment. They would, however, still be contactable through parental home addresses, which could be obtained from their former schools. Face to face interviews with individual respondents (either by open or structured interview) would have been too time consuming. Whereas the pupils, ten years before the enquiry, had been clustered together in their schools, they would now be a dispersed population after several years of working life. Therefore what was now proposed was a postal questionnaire. Selecting schools throughout England on an entirely random

basis, and then approaching them for information and co-operation, would similarly have been costly of time, particularly in view of a possible high rate of refusal.

The 'A' level enquiry had obvious parallels with the previously mentioned York University graduate survey. The respondents could only be contacted via the schools which they had attended and had now left, just as the graduates had been located through their old colleges or universities. In obtaining the necessary last known addresses of the potential respondents the researcher is heavily dependent on the goodwill of these institutions. In addition, their known support for the enquiry was important in motivating the potential respondents to reply.

The scope of the enquiry restricted by limited resources pointed to seeking an economy of effort in successfully contacting the sample. It was decided to approach chief education officers, who had previously been contacted by one of their colleagues interested in the project, and to ask them to provide the names of schools likely to co-operate. The co-operation requested of the proposed schools was limited to providing the last known addresses of their former pupils with an 'A' level pass in French and/or German and to asking the heads to allow this project to convey their support to the enquiry in the covering letter to a questionnaire.

The aim was, of course, to design a sample representative of the population and of a type which could reasonably be expected to yield a satisfactory response rate, but which was at the same time feasible within the limited resources of the project. Since the primary interest was in the use made of modern languages, the first stage was to estimate the sample size and structure necessary to produce a number of 'users' among final respondents adequate to the main types of analysis contemplated. It was estimated that at least 40 or 50 'user' respondents in French would be a desirable target to yield useful information on the

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varieties and differences of language use. At the same time it was necessary for the sample design to attempt coverage of German as well as French, and to allow for the much larger proportion of women to men, since far more young women than young men are candidates for 'A' level languages.

Professor E.W. Hawkins of York University in 1972 conducted a very small pilot survey of 'A' level French candidates who had attended five York schools and the unpublished tentative results were available. A total of 82 questionnaires had been dispatched of which 34 were returned completed, a response rate of 41%. This particular enquiry excluded the use of French by students, teachers or civil servants. Thus 15 of the respondents were excluded, but of the remaining 19, 6 were users of French in other types of employment. Thus 6 out of 34 (14-18%) of respondents used French in employment in addition to those who used it as teachers or civil servants.

To allow a safe margin, sample design thus proceeded on the assumption that at least 15% of those with French 'A' level (excluding teachers, students and civil servants) were using their 'A' level French in employment. A significant proportion of those who had continued with their French language studies after 'A' level would have gone into teaching subsequently - and ten years after 'A' level the proportion still in full-time education would be negligible, the proportion of civil servants would also be small. At the same time securing an adequate sample of holders of 'A' level German was of prime concern.

In deciding upon a figure of approximately 45 users of French in employment outside teaching, one had to take into account the desirability of seeking information in detail on the type and extent of use of the language, and set this against the difficulties of, and resources necessary for, achieving a satisfactory response rate on a large sample. Taking 45 respondents as representing 15% of total respondents and

assuming that a response rate of approximately 60% could be achieved, a sample of at least 500 would be required.

To obtain a sample geographically and organisationally 'concentrated' in order to make contacting, tracing, and reminding respondents a feasible and effective process, two further decisions were made. Schools would be sought where large numbers of candidates took 'A' level French. In addition, more than one successive year of candidates from the same schools would be selected. The first of these decisions, of course, did represent a further possible source of bias in the character of the sample. (This is discussed below.)

The most difficult problem of sample design, considered simultaneously with that of the sample of French respondents, was how to obtain a useful number of respondents who had taken German 'A' level, and subsequently, used German in employment, in conjunction with the (necessarily larger) numbers with French. Nationally, there are about one third the number of 'A' level candidates for German compared with those in French. Almost all Germanists also take French. In general, it is not a question of concentration of German in fewer sixth forms, but of an approximately one-third German to French ratio in most. In the absence of any better information it was necessary to assume that approximately 15% of Germanists (as with French) would be using the language in employment other than teaching, approximately ten years after obtaining 'A' levels.

By asking the schools approached for the purposes of German to supply also the names of pupils taking 'A' level French in the same years, we could expect to obtain an (overlapping) sample of French candidates of about three times the size. Two possible solutions were : the random elimination of some of those taking French only; or alternatively, the elimination of all those taking French only in a certain number of schools. The main drawback of these procedures was that one would then have finished

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with a sample whose composition was unduly biased towards sixth form 'specialist linguists', i.e. those whose choice of 'A' level subjects had included two languages. Candidates including only one language (almost invariably French) among an otherwise non-linguistic 'package' of (usually three) 'A' level subjects would have been seriously under-represented. Such a solution was, therefore, not adopted and this inevitably led to having to accept a substantial reduction in the number of German users.

In respect of the imbalance between the sexes, it did appear worthwhile to use different sampling fractions. In the event, contacts with the schools selected yielded approximately twice as many names of girls as boys who had passed either 'A' level French and/or German in the four selected years, 1967-70. It was, therefore, decided to include all the boys (i.e. 287) in the sample and make a one-in-two interval sample of the 575 girls. This gave a total sample size of 575. This size sample could be expected to secure an adequate number of French users. On the assumption that approximately a third of the sample would also have taken German (or, in a very few cases, had taken German but not French) the results could be expected to be a German 'A' level sample of around 200. A 60% response rate would yield 120 respondents, of which around 18 might be users in employment outside teaching (assuming 15% such use, as for French).

This compromise between the desirable numbers of users in employment for analysis (40-50, as in the case of French), and the need to avoid bias in the general composition of 'A' level subjects was an unavoidable one, given the resources available to the project. Certain other factors, which it was possible to take account of in general but not in quantitative terms, at the point of sample design, suggested that such a sample might nonetheless yield useful results : the 15% estimate for use in employment outside teaching was, in the event, on the optimistic side, although 23% of all the respondents used French in their current post at the time of



the enquiry, 13% were teachers and only 10% non teacher users. The survey was concerned not only with patterns of use in employment, but also of those in leisure, a matter on which there was almost no prior information apart from the fairly confident belief that it was significant. And finally, it was felt that, whatever the drawbacks and imbalance of the sample, there would probably be a sufficient number of German users among the respondents to allow the detection of substantial divergences between patterns of German and French use.

A consequence of the interval sampling of women, of course, was that it was necessary, wherever possible, to analyse the results for men and women separately. Where for certain purposes, they are combined (for example, all German users, in certain analyses), a weight of two has been applied to all the women in the sample. Wherever this is so it is clearly indicated (weighted sample). In reality there were, of course, slightly different response rates for men and women (and in addition a small number of original sample members were reallocated or eliminated on receipt of returns). Thus the weight applied should, strictly speaking, have been slightly different from two. However, given the nature of the sample of schools it was felt this would be a pointless complication, adding to the difficulty of analysing and presenting results, while contributing very little to greater precision.

The final unweighted returns consisted of 144 men and 154 women making a total of 298. These figures have been used in certain instances when comparing men with women. The weighted sample consists of 144 men and 308 women giving a total of 452. The percentage comparison of women compared to men in any example in which men and women are separated will remain the same whether weighted or unweighted figures are used.

The total weighted sample of 452 gives a more accurate picture when dealing with men and women combined. It is this weighted total that is

used in most of the analyses and tables.

Not only had the minimum sample size to be decided upon but also the geographical areas and other characteristics of the schools from which the sample would be drawn.

If the proposed sample size of approximately 600 was taken from one year's 'A' level French passes in England and Wales this would represent just over 3% of the annual average of around 18,000 successful candidates in the latter part of the 1960s. If the same sample size were taken from consecutive years the representative proportion would be lower. Regional variations - if any - as well as any possible differences between candidates from rural and urban areas needed to be reflected in the sample to ensure a balance between these factors.

Approaches to individual schools throughout England, for the names and addresses of former 'A' level candidates, would almost certainly have resulted in refusals from most. Clearly what was being asked involved considerable work for schools in providing the address list. Also the notion of confidentiality may have inhibited headteachers from co-operating. The results and addresses could not have been obtained from examination boards - in any case the only address the examination board has for a candidate is that of the school as an examination centre.

The problem was to choose an adequate number of schools but with large numbers of 'A' level linguists (of a reasonably representative variety). The author, therefore, contacted the County Education Officer of West Sussex, Mr. Roy Potter, who was known to be interested in modern languages, who had been a local education representative at various educational conferences and who was a governor of the government sponsored Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research. The assumption that he would on behalf of this current project be willing to contact chief education officers in various parts of England to ensure their

co-operation in providing the names of schools willing to co-operate in this enquiry proved correct. Mr. Potter asked the chief education officers of a number of local education authorities for their co-operation. From this number five LEAs were selected from various parts of England so as to have a balance between North and South, the Midlands and the London area to include both rural and urban areas. The five LEAs chosen were : Cumbria, the London borough of Hillingdon, Leicestershire, Manchester and Sheffield.

The chief education officers were asked to suggest schools in their authorities which would, in their opinion, be able to provide an adequate number of successful 'A' level candidates in French and German for the enquiry. All five authorities provided the names of such schools. There were representatives of both shire and metropolitan districts, as well as an outer London LEA.

The former pupils in our survey had attended the sixth forms in sixteen schools before the schools were subsequently reorganised. At the time of the survey some of these schools had been reorganised. From the original sixteen schools, of which five had been grammar schools (including one direct grant school) and two comprehensive, there emerged twelve comprehensive schools and two sixth form colleges, i.e. a total of fourteen institutions. The candidates sat their examinations in the four years 1967-70 inclusive from the following five 'A' level examination boards : Joint Matriculation Board, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Oxford and Cambridge.

Records of past pupils would need to be consulted, if the last known address of these successful 'A' level languages candidates were to be found. From small scale enquiries, it was assumed that schools would keep records of their former pupils. A possible major stumbling block was that reorganisation of schools from grammar schools, from which the vast majority of 'A' level candidates in the maintained sector of education would have come, into various different types of comprehensive schools

might make the location of these records difficult. School sites might have changed with school amalgamations and reorganisation.

The headmasters/headmistresses or principals of these institutions were contacted by letter. Reference was made to the permission of their chief education officer for the project to seek their co-operation. These schools were asked to make available to the investigation the names and last known addresses of 'A' level candidates who had passed their examinations in French and/or German in the years 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1970.

Almost all of the schools provided the information requested. One headmistress of a single sex school declined to assist the project on the ground that some forty record cards would have to be turned up. Additionally she remarked that almost all of her girls would have married and left the area and that many of their parents also had changed their addresses.

Fortunately this refusal came from one of the first schools contacted. The county education officer obliged by sending the name of another school. With this kind of objection in mind, subsequently letters to heads or principals were modified to include a paragraph stating the appreciation of the project for the extra work involved in providing the requested names and addresses. It also mentioned the fact that it was known that this group of people were geographically mobile but that there were ways of finding out current addresses e.g. by using the "snowball" technique of asking respondents for the latest addresses of any of their contemporaries.

Some of the chief education officers delegated the task of contacting the schools to their modern languages advisers, from whom were received the list of former pupils passing 'A' level French and German. Two lists were not usable because they were incomplete. An additional school submitted its list of candidates so late that it could not be included

in the sample. At the time of mailing the questionnaire the names of 862 people who had passed 'A' level were known from 14 schools (287 men and 573 women); since, as previously mentioned, the women outnumbered the men by approximately two to one, a one in two sample of women was taken to yield a final sample size of 287 men and 286 women.

### The questionnaire

#### Design of the questionnaire

In designing both the content and the format of the postal questionnaire, reference was made to the graduate questionnaire used by the York team. Certain lessons could be learned from the difficulties that had apparently been experienced by the graduate respondents in giving the information sought through ambiguity in the working of questions and instructions. Improvements were made in the layout of the questionnaire, and the better sequencing or arranging of questions, to facilitate the coding for punching on cards prior to computer analysis. The new questionnaire devised for the survey of 'A' level foreign language users explored completely new ground in looking at patterns of use in leisure. (*see appendix*)

Surveys using the postal questionnaire technique face certain problems. Unambiguous communication between the enquirer and the respondent can be difficult to achieve when the questions cannot be further explained by an interviewer. The amount of detail that can be included to produce worthwhile information has to be balanced against an adverse effect too many detailed questions might have in deterring the respondent from completing the questionnaire.

One of the most general features of postal survey is that respondents find it easier to answer either "yes/no" questions or simple questions asking for one piece of information. As far as possible, the questionnaire proceeded from personal questions concerning the respondent

through to foreign language acquisition and further education, then to the use of French and/or German in employment, leading on to leisure use of these languages.

In order to simplify some of the preceding areas of enquiry where more than one item of information was sought, two or more questions were asked on one topic. As can be seen from the format of the final questionnaire used (*see appendix*) this method of soliciting information was used in some cases.

Most of the questions sought straightforward information. However, one question required the respondents to assess their level of language ability in French and/or German over five language skill areas. This information would be of importance in drawing up the profile of foreign language use, but collecting accurate data was not without its problems.

#### Defining levels of ability - Problems of definition

The previously mentioned York report had itself criticised the definitions of levels of language ability used in its survey. The task was therefore obvious. How to improve on these descriptions ? George Perren, the director of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, wrote as an appendix to the York report in 1974 an appraisal of the difficulties of defining 'levels of performance' in foreign languages. He points out that "we employ language when performing particular tasks" and continues "Efforts to describe ability by reference to modes of language use, such as speaking, hearing, reading or writing, are not much more successful, unless we know what people are speaking, hearing, reading or writing about, and to what extent understanding takes place". Perren admitted that "As far as foreign languages for use in commerce and industry are concerned ... it seems most unlikely that any juggling with verbal definitions can provide any better formula for describing either a scale of ability or a scale of achievement than they have in the past." If one accepts in its entirety the assertion that no

change in any verbal definition arrived at can produce a more accurate scale of language ability or performance than the choice would seem to rest between adopting the existing definitions as used in the York surveys of both language graduates and foreign language using employees or abandoning any attempt at assessment of the respondent's own view of his/her level of achievement.

The only effective way of objectively assessing the level of foreign language ability would have been to construct a series of tests and ask the respondents to submit to these or, alternatively, to devise a necessarily somewhat lengthy subsidiary questionnaire with very specific sub-divisions on the level of language performance, linguistic contexts and the various skill areas. Such a proposal seemed beyond the scope of the enquiry. It could also have had an effect on the response rate to a personal questionnaire. Such an enquiry may have been more appropriate to a face to face interview.

In 1978 i.e. a year after this 'A' level enquiry was undertaken the Council of Europe in its publication "Identifying the needs of adults learning a foreign language" reproduced as an appendix to its section on "methods of collection" (of data) the York questionnaire to graduates complete with its descriptions of levels of language ability. It would seem that the pioneering role of this pilot survey had been recognised although it still needed further elaboration.

In seeking to improve rather than abandon the definitions of proficiency levels of language, contact was made with Frau Ingeborg von Herzenberg, of the Federal Bureau of Languages (Bundessprachenamt) in Hllrth, West Germany. At the time of the correspondence in 1976 the group engaged in developing teaching materials in English, French and Russian undertook to develop skill-orientated test models on the basis of new definitions of proficiency levels. These definitions seemed to have been devised on similar lines to those used in the York enquiry. After consid-

eration, they were not thought to add in any substantial way to the previously used York definitions and were therefore not adopted, since they did not seem likely to yield any more relevant data nor to present any more readily comprehensive descriptions than those already used. Unfortunately this survey was not able to benefit from the study by Mats Oskarsson on "Approaches to self-assessment in foreign language learning" which was published (in 1978) shortly after our data collection had been completed. This work pointed a way to the more accurate collection of data through simple personalised statements of the respondents' possible language proficiency for the respondent to tick e.g. "I write the language as well as a well educated native speaker" etc.

Any attempt to quantify the amount of use made of foreign languages, in either the context of leisure or employment, encounters the problem of deciding on criteria which would result in reliable data, but which asks information from respondents in a way that they would find easy to respond to. The York survey of modern language graduates and employees in industry using foreign languages sought to quantify various types of language activity in employment by using the apparently simple expedient of requesting information on the number of hours per week spent using foreign languages. Even where respondents gave an average time spent per week, the results did not accurately reflect language use in practice. One factor, for instance, that played an important role in this calculation was the intermittent use of languages. This would have been accommodated better by a category "occasional" rather than a specific average amount of time per week.

A particular example of this would be an employee concerned with export sales. When travelling abroad at certain times of the year, the need to use the foreign language would be paramount. For, say, a fortnight such an employee would function almost entirely in the foreign language in conversation, negotiation, speaking on the telephone, all in a variety



of contexts. The necessity to read and understand both technical and business material, whether it be technical magazines, documents, newspapers or letters could be an urgent matter and even to write letters in the foreign language could be a requirement for this limited period. Such a sales trip could be followed by a period in the UK when very little communication of any kind would take place in the foreign language. If these foreign visits, although vital to the success of the employee's work, were very infrequent an average number of minutes engaged on a particular language activity would not accurately reflect the situation. Other examples of intermittent use in an office context seemed to be very typical. A general pattern of occasional use had emerged. Since the amount of time spent using a foreign language varied and the frequency or infrequency of use similarly varied, four categories were devised concerning the various frequencies of language use :

- (a) none
- (b) occasional
- (c) at least one hour per week on average
- (d) more than one hour per week

The bench-mark of significant use was (c) : one hour per week on average. The category (b) occasional, although imprecise, was intended to cater for both regular use of less than one hour per week, as well as intermittent intensive use as in the example previously given.

More specific categories could have been added e.g. "On how many occasions within the last month did you use foreign languages in your work ?" This was the case in the enquiry by Peter Olaf Locms on behalf of the Danish Radio (1977-78) in his investigation of the modern language needs of the Danish adult population, This would not have accurately accounted for the intermittent use of languages. The four point scale adopted for the 'A' level languages survey seemed to be an acceptable compromise.

The four categories of use of French and German in leisure activities were less precise :

- (a) none
- (b) occasional
- (c) regular
- (d) frequent

It was considered that, although there was considerable scope for variable interpretation of these amounts of use, greater accuracy of definition would not necessarily provide more reliable data. This area of recall : leisure activities, is not one in which people normally expect to quantify the time they spend. Any apparent refinement of definition could have tried to force a reluctant respondent into unwanted detail. This could have provoked a refusal to complete this section or to instant, but artificially exact, answers to this question.

#### Importance of the language skills

One question attempted to obtain the respondent's appraisal of the value of listening (comprehension), speaking, reading (comprehension) and writing in French and German on a four point scale.

Essential	E
Useful	U
Occasionally useful	O
No use	N

The same criticism of imprecision and variable interpretation of meaning of the description could be levelled at this question. What was aimed at was an indication of the respondent's assessment of the practical use of these linguistic activities, whilst realising that the responses would give only a broad view. If a pattern were to emerge, this could be placed against the general pattern of activities undertaken in an 'A' level language course.

One area of enquiry that was not covered was the respondent's opinion

of the 'A' level course he/she had followed. The content of the 'A' level examinations was known but not the teaching methods of the individual teachers, neither was the balance of the various language activities within the teaching programme including the study of set foreign language literary texts. This field of enquiry would have relied heavily on recall of reactions to learning experiences that had occurred up to ten years previously, and could have been misconstrued by schools as an enquiry into teaching methods and their efficiency in the sixth forms. It was considered that this might have a deterrent effect on the willingness of schools to cooperate.

The final question was therefore open-ended. In the case of the York graduate enquiry, respondents had used this question to offer their opinions on the university courses that they had followed. The fact that respondents chose to write about these topics, when not specifically asked to do so, can give a fairly clear indication of their interest and concern. The number of those who comment as a proportion of the total number of respondents helps to quantify this concern. In fact 42% (192) of the total (452 weighted sample) respondents made at least one comment in this 'A' level enquiry. Comments about the content of the 'A' level French and German courses appeared in this section.

In all, the questionnaire consisted of 27 questions, and it was intended to be easy to follow through and answer. Some of the questions consisted of more than one part i.e. a main question and a dependent or sub-question, in particular those concerning the categories of language use, levels of language ability, further courses of study and types and duration of employment. Almost all of these questions required little more than a tick in an appropriate box. Single word answers or dates covered almost all of the remainder. Most of the questions were seeking factual information, nearly all requiring an effort of memory, a limited number, such as those asking how useful certain language skills had been,

sought an assessment from the respondent.

### Layout of the questionnaire

As a positive factor encouraging potential respondents to complete the questionnaire, both the printing and the layout of the questionnaire aimed at making it as attractive and as comprehensive as possible within the financial resources of the project. The orange cover of the questionnaire, with bold but simple lettering, briefly gave the basic information on what its purpose was and where it had originated from. Succinct information on how to complete the questionnaire was printed on the inside of the cover. The questions had been typed on an electric typewriter and the margin and boxes were drawn by hand with a fine black pen. The University of York Printing Unit reduced the camera ready copy photographically to enable plates to be produced to print eight pages of the questionnaire by the offset-litho method on white paper. The questionnaire was collated and finished with a glued binding. In order to ensure confidentiality each questionnaire was identified on the front cover by an eight digit number rather than by the respondent's name, former school and local education authority.

### Facilitating coding

The questionnaire was designed with ease of coding in mind. Boxes in which numerical values from 0 to 9 could be written were printed and numbered in the right hand margin on each page of the questionnaire. It was so arranged that the data from the questionnaire could be contained on three punch cards of eighty columns. The first eight columns of each card reproduced the questionnaire identification number, the 9th column was preprinted with the punchcard number and the boxes in the margins were numbered to correspond to the column numbers on the three punch cards. Although each questionnaire was not precoded the individual hand-coding of each questionnaire and subsequent punching of the information on to punch cards was accomplished relatively easily thanks to the clear

presentation and thereby minimised errors.

### Conduct of survey

The procedure for mailing the questionnaires was as follows : first the questionnaires were sent to the addresses provided by the schools. Enclosed with the questionnaire was a letter setting out the aims of the enquiry and mentioning the support of the respondent's former headteacher and county education officer. A free post return envelope was dispatched together with a "snowball" list. The "snowball" list asked each potential respondent for the latest known address of his/her contemporaries who were included in the sample in order to update the list of addresses received from schools. As soon as a snowball address was received, a second questionnaire was sent to the new address in the hope of reaching the potential respondent. Since the return address was clearly printed on the envelope, asking for the envelope to be returned if the addressee was not known, it was very soon discovered which potential respondents were not contactable through the address that had been received from the school. After a delay of three months, a second mailing was sent to all the addresses from which nothing had been received.

A total of 573 questionnaires were dispatched to - what we had been informed by the contributing schools were - 287 men and 286 women who had passed 'A' level French and/or German during the four years 1967-70. It was discovered later that some of this information was incorrect and the totals, in fact, were changed. As a direct result of the Freepost facility and having a return address printed on the front of the envelope, 93 questionnaires, 43 women and 50 men, were returned as 'not known at this address'. Unless another address was obtained by the 'snowball' technique (i.e. asking respondents to provide up-to-date home addresses of their contemporaries in the survey sample), no further attempt was made to contact this group.

As a result of this first mailing, 221 questionnaires were returned completed, 105 women and 116 men. Included with some of the completed questionnaires were also some 'snowball' lists with later addresses for potential respondents. As soon as these new addresses were received a second questionnaire package was sent to the new address. If more than one new address was received, a questionnaire was sent to each one. In all, 257 such questionnaire packages were sent, of which 121 were sent to women and 136 were to men. At the end of January 1978, a second questionnaire was sent to the 173 members of the sample from whom by then no reply had been received (i.e. 30% of the sample). From this mailing 34 completed questionnaires were received, of which 18 were from women and 16 from men, and 22 were returned as 'Not known at this address', of which 15 were assumed to be women and 7 men.

From the returned questionnaires it became apparent that some respondents had to be excluded from the original sample, i.e. they had sat the 'A' level French or German examination but had not passed it. Thus there was the difference between the assumed sample to which questionnaires had been dispatched and the real sample, which was reduced from 573 to 536. From this revised sample we received 298 usable questionnaires, which was a response rate of 55.6%. The response from the 298 women was 154 i.e. 54.2% and from the 252 men was higher at 144 i.e. 57.1%. The final balance of the sexes among the respondents in the unweighted sample was 47% men and 53% women. Moser (C.A. Moser (1958) "Survey methods in social investigation Heinemann, London) quotes mail survey response rates as low as 10% and as high as 90% but quotes a successful example of 55%, for a special survey, which is the case here, although slightly lower than the 60% which had been aimed at.

Thus a satisfactory response rate had been achieved to a questionnaire, which had been designed to collect the data necessary to elucidate the use that our respondents had made of French and German.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Analysis of results

The results of the analysis of the questionnaires are presented in this chapter under the following three broad headings :

*Characteristics of the respondents*

*The use of language in employment*

*The use of language in leisure*

#### Characteristics of the respondents

Successes in the 'A' level examinations of the 298 (unweighted sample) respondents were impressively high. There were in all (including French and German) 884 passes in grades A to E at 'A' level. Our respondents had been selected for inclusion in this enquiry on the basis of having passed 'A' level in French and/or German. The vast majority of our respondents (93.6%) had an 'A' level pass in another subject apart from either of these, this being equally true for women and men. The most typical respondents had passed three 'A' level subjects.

However, the respondents from our sample, although they had achieved 'A' level passes in French and/or German, were not necessarily destined to follow a course in further or higher education in which modern languages were a major component. In that particular, they differed from the samples of modern language graduates. It must, nevertheless, be admitted that the other 'A' level examination subjects, in which our respondents were successful, were very biased towards arts subjects for women in our sample, and considerably biased towards arts subjects for the men. However, for the men, mathematics and economics were among their more popular subject successes in the 'A' level examinations, as well as the arts subjects.

Their subject choices at 'A' level would have predisposed those among our respondents (particularly the women) who wanted to continue

their education after school towards arts courses, which tend to give not all that dissimilar career patterns to those adopted by the modern language graduates in the York University survey. Indeed, as has already been disclosed, almost 2/5 of the men and over half of the women continued their French studies to some extent after 'A' level.

Therefore it would have run counter to the evidence to date, if we had expected a very high rate of use of French and German in employment. In the case of the men, bearing in mind the popularity of economics and mathematics for them, we could have expected some variation in the kinds of courses of further or higher education that they followed, which in turn would have led them to different careers.

#### 'A' level grades in French and German

As has already been mentioned, the main criterion for inclusion in the sample had been the possession of an 'A' level pass in French and/or German. Schools had been sought where substantial numbers of candidates succeeded in these subjects, but purely to limit the workload in data collection. Maybe larger subject departments owe their size partly to their success. This could have introduced a bias into the sample. The fact that schools were recommended to the project by chief education officers could have included an unintentional bias to schools with better than average results. Additionally, those with greater success at 'A' level may have been more motivated to respond to the questionnaire. Whatever the reasons, the sample respondents achieved a higher proportion of A, B and C grades in both French and German than the average for all successful candidates in these languages in England and Wales over the four years 1967-70, which included not only school candidates but also those from colleges of further education. This may well have been the reason why so many of them continued their French and German studies to the level of an honours degree.



Table 2

The respondents' 'A' level grades in French and German

F R E N C H

MEN			WOMEN		TOTAL	
Grades	No.	% of men	Grades	No.	% of women	% of total
A	22	16.4%	A	60	21.3%	19.7%
B	32	23.9%	B	70	24.8%	24.5%
C	25	18.7%	C	48	17.0%	17.5%
D	28	20.9%	D	50	17.7%	18.8%
E	27	20.1%	E	52	18.4%	19.0%
Not known	0	—	Not known	2	0.7%	0.5%
	134	100%		282	100%	100%

G E R M A N

MEN			WOMEN		TOTAL	
Grades	No.	% of men	Grades	No.	% of women	% of total
A	12	23.1%	A	12	12.3%	16.0%
B	14	26.9%	B	30	30.6%	29.3%
C	11	21.2%	C	16	16.3%	18.0%
D	10	19.2%	D	20	20.4%	20.0%
E	5	9.6%	E	20	20.4%	16.7%
	52	100%		98	100%	100%

(weighted)

Table 3

From the tables in the Statistics of Education it was possible to calculate the average pass grades in French and German in the Summer Examinations for the years 1967-70. The total number of successful candidates for these four years was 74,076 for French and 22,962 for German.

Grades obtained by successful candidates in Summer examinations in England and Wales (1967-70) in French and German  
'A' levels

FRENCH

MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
Grades	Percentage of men	Grades	Percentage of women	Grades	Percentage of total
A	11.5%	A	14.7%	A	13.6%
B	20.0%	B	22.5%	B	21.6%
C	16.3%	C	16.0%	C	16.1%
D	21.9%	D	21.9%	D	21.9%
E	30.3%	E	24.8%	E	26.9%
				35.2%	
				51.3%	

GERMAN

MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
Grades	Percentage of men	Grades	Percentage of women	Grades	Percentage of total
A	15.6%	A	17.1%	A	16.3%
B	21.0%	B	23.9%	B	22.7%
C	15.5%	C	16.0%	C	15.8%
D	20.9%	D	18.4%	D	19.4%
E	27.0%	E	24.6%	E	25.3%
				39.0%	
				54.8%	

A closer look at the percentage of respondents achieving higher 'A' level grades in French and German reveals the fact that the women's higher attainments in French have boosted the overall percentage for this subject, and the better results in German by men have considerably improved the proportion of the total candidates gaining A, B, C grades. When, as below, these grades are compared with the national picture, it would appear that the level of attainment of the respondents from the sample is much higher. To some extent, this may well be in a bias from the size and type of schools from which the sample was selected. Another probable bias factor, which could account in part for this apparent higher achievement, is that successful candidates may well have been more ready to respond. The extent of the high quality of examination attainment as compared with national statistics can be seen from selected percentage extracted from previous tables.

Table 4

*Proportion of respondents obtaining grades A, B, C in French and German*

*'A' levels*

F R E N C H

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>		<u>Men &amp; Women</u>	
	Sample	National figures	Sample	National figures	Sample	National figures
A+B	40.3%	31.5%	46.1%	37.2%	44.2%	35.2%
A+B+C	59.0%	47.8%	63.1%	53.2%	61.7%	51.3%

G E R M A N

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>		<u>Men &amp; Women</u>	
	Sample	National figures	Sample	National figures	Sample	National figures
A+B	50.0%	36.6%	42.8%	41.0%	45.3%	39.0%
A+B+C	71.2%	52.1%	59.1%	57.0%	63.3%	54.8%

(weighted)

What clearly appears is that, in all comparisons between the sample and the national figures in French, the sample achieves an approximate 10% advantage. In German, the very high achievement of the men is noticeable but is not

easy to explain, whereas the performance of the women more closely matches that of the national figures. This high examination performance of the men could be a factor in any subsequent use of German.

Comparison of performance in 'A' level languages and their later use in employment

The level of achievement of the respondents in their 'A' level language examinations is one of the many factors which may be associated with the likelihood of using language skills in employment. This level of achievement may, of course, have been modified by subsequent events, such as further or higher study of the language or time spent abroad in the speech community of that language. The 'A' level grades of those who used their French are listed in Table 5. The overall higher performance at 'A' level could be a source of bias tending to accentuate the extent of language use from our returns.

Table 5

*Respondents using French in their job*

'A' level Grade	Men		Women (weighted)		Total	Percentage
		%		%		
A	12	31.6%	22	34.4%	34	33.3%
B	10	26.3%	16	25.0%	26	25.5%
C	4	10.5%	8	12.5%	12	11.8%
D	6	15.8%	12	18.7%	18	17.6%
E	6	15.8%	6	9.4%	12	11.8%
Total	38	100%	64	100%	102	100%

Almost 60% of the respondents who had used their French in employment had achieved the higher grades A or B in their 'A' level examination. To some extent this is explained by the preponderance of teachers among the employees using French who will have had to achieve high grades to qualify for admittance to a course of higher study. Nevertheless this result gives a general indication of the correlation between the use by respondents of French in employment, and their having achieved a well above average result

in the 'A' level French examination. There is little difference between the 'A' level grades of the men and women using French in employment, although the women's grades were marginally higher. There was a small number of users of French in employment who had no 'A' level pass in French.

Table 6

*Respondents using German in their job*

'A' level Grade	Men		Women (weighted)		Total	Percentage
		%		%		
A	2	13.3%	4	20.0%	6	17.1%
B	5	33.3%	10	50.0%	15	42.9%
C	3	20.0%	4	20.0%	7	20.0%
D	3	20.0%	-	-	3	8.6%
E	2	13.3%	2	10.0%	4	11.4%
	15	100%	20	100%	35	100%

Of the German users with German 'A' level 60% had achieved grades A and B. Thus the vast majority of users of German had previously been awarded the higher grades in this language at 'A' level. There seems to be an overall indication that a high proportion of the users of French and German had obtained the higher grades in their 'A' level examination and were therefore very likely to be those with greater linguistic proficiency. A much higher percentage of the women users of German in their job had grades A and B than was the case for men. Since the number of respondents using German was small, the percentages need to be treated with caution.

Study in further or higher education

The respondents from our sample had achieved well above average grades in their 'A' level examinations in French and German. It is, therefore, not surprising that many of them should continue their study of these languages after leaving school.

A large proportion of the number of respondents with 'A' level French continued their language studies on at least one course of which French was, to a varying extent, a component. There was a higher continuation rate

with the women (57.8%) compared with the men (41.9%).

Table 7

*Qualifications obtained from further study of French by respondents with  
'A' level French*

	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>As a percentage of those with 'A' level French</u>
BA Hons.	98	23.5%
BA General	16	3.8%
Certificate of Education	37	8.9%
HND Certificate	5	1.2%
MA degree	3	.7%
RSA bilingual secretary diploma	4	1.0%
Secretary/Linguist diploma	4	1.0%
London Chamber diploma	4	1.0%
RSA secretary/linguist diploma	4	1.0%
RSA language business diploma	4	1.0%
B.Ed	8	1.9%
P.G.C.E.	2	.5%
Diplôme d'études françaises	2	.5%
B.R.N.C. linguist	1	.2%
B.S.C.	2	.5%
L.L.B.	2	.5%
No qualifications	18	4.3%
No further study of French	202	48.5%
(weighted)	416	100%

There was a higher rate of continuation of study of German post 'A' level than of French, with 77.5% of women and 57.7% of men with 'A' level German continuing some form of further or higher study of the language. As with French more women than men continue to study the language, but overall German is more of an elective subject in the school curriculum which pupils opt to learn. This element of positive choice in the case of German may indicate a greater positive interest in the language from the beginning, with a concomitant desire to continue learning the language after 'A' level.

Table 8

*Qualifications obtained from further study of German by respondents with  
'A' level German*

	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>As a percentage of those with 'A' level German</u>
BA Hons.	48	32.0%
BA General	7	4.7%
Certificate of Education	6	4.0%
HND	4	2.7%
MA	2	1.3%
RSA Bilingual secretary diploma	2	1.3%
Secretary/linguist diploma	2	1.3%
Post graduate secretary linguist	2	1.3%
London Chamber diploma	4	2.7%
RSA secretary linguist diploma	2	1.3%
RSA language business diploma	2	1.3%
CSC Interpreter	1	.7%
No qualifications	16	10.7%
No further study of German	52	34.7%
(weighted)	150	100%

In the case of both French and German when studied post 'A' level - and this included instances where both languages were studied together - the courses were, to a very large extent, in full-time or higher education leading to a higher qualification.

Further study of languages was not confined to French and German. However, the experience of learning a different language may indeed have been sparked off by the experience of learning French or German at school. In all, 22 different languages had been learned by respondents. There was overwhelming agreement among those who had learned other languages that learning German and/or French had aided their learning of another language. Also, many of the other languages that were learned, were studied as part of a course of which French and/or German was also a component. The rank order of frequency of the top three languages mentioned, as forming

part of further or higher study among the respondents who had studied at least one of the 22 aforementioned other languages in their first post 'A' level language course, was as follows :

1. Spanish
2. Russian
3. Italian

The other 19 languages occurred far less frequently. As can be seen, the top three languages studied apart from French or German were among the most common five studied in the British education system. The more exotic languages understandably were learned by comparatively few.

Table 9

*Languages studied by respondents in further or higher education*

	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
South Asian languages	2	0.4%
Spanish	47	10.4%
Italian	28	6.2%
Latin	14	3.1%
Dutch	2	0.4%
Flemish	2	0.4%
Classical Greek	7	1.5%
Greek	1	0.2%
Swedish	5	1.1%
Norwegian	2	0.4%
Danish	2	0.4%
Russian	27	6.0%
Hausa	2	0.4%
Chichewa	1	0.2%
Chinese	2	0.4%
Japanese	3	0.7%
Hindi	1	0.2%
No further language studies	304	67.3%
	<u>452</u>	<u>100%</u>



Table 10

*Qualifications obtained by respondents from further study of languages  
other than French and German*

	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
BA Hons	56	12.4%
BA General	13	2.9%
'A' level	2	0.4%
'O' level	15	3.3%
P.G.C.E.	2	0.4%
Secretary linguist	3	0.7%
Other examinations	8	1.8%
No qualifications	49	10.8%
No further language studies	304	67.3%
	<hr/> 452	<hr/> 100%

#### Residence abroad

Many sixth formers studying modern foreign languages at school travel abroad to visit the countries, where these languages are spoken, in order to practise them and to acquaint themselves with the culture of the speech community. As has already been stated, a significant proportion of our sample of respondents continued their study of foreign languages after leaving school. A feature of most modern language degree courses is a period of residence abroad, when the student immerses him/herself in the foreign speech community by either working or studying there. Many students attribute their fluency in the language to this period abroad.

With these factors in mind, the questionnaire asked about the respondents' residence abroad for periods of at least three months. It was considered that if the stay abroad was to have a marked effect on a person's linguistic performance, then three months would be an effective minimum period. Clearly, young people and students in particular travel abroad for a wide range of reasons not necessarily connected with foreign language acquisition. There was space in the questionnaire for the

respondents to write the name of the first foreign country where they had stayed and the length of time that they remained there. In the event, up to three significant periods of foreign residence were written in on some questionnaires. The list below reveals the rank order of countries in which our respondents had most frequently resided, not only during their student days but possibly subsequently in connection with their work or for other purposes.

A total of 33 countries had been visited for at least three months. At the time of the enquiry, 13 (unweighted sample) respondents were living abroad, of whom 9 were living in Western European countries. Well over a third of our former 'A' level candidates had spent a period of at least three months abroad. A high proportion of these had stayed in a very limited number of countries. Three countries predominate as the most popular among the country of first residence abroad viz. France, Germany, and Spain, and together they account for almost three quarters of the respondents living abroad for a time. If one includes Austria, Belgium and Switzerland it becomes apparent that approximately four fifths of those living abroad chose countries where three main languages are spoken viz. French, German and Spanish.

Rank order of place of first period of residence abroad for at least 3 months

1. France
2. West Germany
3. Spain
4. Belgium
5. Switzerland
6. Austria
7. Other countries

Apart from Italy and Sweden, which are mentioned in subsequent stays abroad by four or five respondents, no other country attracted so many of the respondents for further prolonged visits, confirming the predilection

for countries speaking the three most common foreign languages taught in the United Kingdom education system.

We have seen that over a third of all the respondents had lived abroad for more than three months, in many cases probably as part of a course of study. Three-quarters of those who had lived abroad did so in a French or German speaking country, approximately twice as many spending their time in a French-speaking country as in a German-speaking country. If we look again at those respondents who obtained higher or further qualifications after passing 'A' level and who used the language in employment, we can perhaps infer that foreign language acquisition in the foreign speech community is an important factor, together with further study of the language after leaving school, in using the language in employment.

Of those using French with further qualifications after 'A' level, 71% had spent a period of at least three months abroad. The overall pattern of previous residence in a francophone country by those using French in their job both with and without further study of French is much less at 49%. We see, therefore, a marked tendency for users of French with further study to have spent time abroad. There is, therefore, a very strong association of residence abroad in francophone countries for those who use French in employment and have pursued their French studies beyond 'A' level. This is most probably in connection with their French courses of studies; purely holiday visits abroad would be unlikely to last for three months.

With German, the situation shows slightly fewer of the total users in employment having resided in a German speaking country at 43%, but of those with further study of German who were using the language in their job, a strikingly high 88% had spent at least three months abroad. The same close association with residence abroad in a German speaking country and following a course of study in German beyond 'A' level is very similar to that of residence in a French speaking country and post 'A' level study French.

These figures indicate that a large number of those with higher qualifications, and using French or German in employment, will have spent a period of residence abroad as part of their course. However, over half of those using French or German had not indicated that they had spent at least three months abroad as part of their language learning studies. Whatever effect this may or may not have had on their foreign language learning, one can reasonably infer that their knowledge of the country and its way of life, customs etc. would be less than those with a more prolonged contact with the foreign speech community. This could put them at a disadvantage, since successful communication in a foreign language implies an understanding of the life of the foreign speech community which it is difficult to acquire unless one has lived in that community.

#### Language ability

Probably the most contentious area of the data collection was the self-assessment by the respondents of their level of performance in various activities in French and/or German. Four levels were identified in the following five areas of language activity, with level 1 as the lowest and level 4 as the highest. Fuller descriptions are available facing page 4 of the questionnaire.

A. Conversation	Levels 1 - 4
B. Interpreting	Levels 2 - 4
C. Reading	Levels 1 - 4
D. Writing	Levels 1 - 4
E. Written translation	Levels 1 - 4

Not only can the descriptions of the four levels be criticised on theoretical linguistic grounds but also on their general lack of precision. It was realised that the possibility existed of misunderstanding the descriptions, of optimistically over-assessing or critically under-assessing linguistic performance. Nevertheless, with the twin aims of obtaining an approximate indication of the respondents' linguistic

capabilities in French and/or German, and of expressing these, albeit arbitrarily derived, levels in an English comprehensible to the layman or woman, the exercise can be considered as having been useful and of value. This was particularly true when analysis of the types of use of these languages was undertaken, where information on the respondents' linguistic ability gave some indication of the respondents' likely level of linguistic performance in carrying out the various tasks in the foreign language.

Levels of language ability among employees using French and/or German

The language tasks performed by those using French or German in employment may not necessarily have required either the whole range of their potential skills or the use of any particular skill to the height of their maximum potential level of competence. The respondents did not all give a self-assessment for all skill areas. Therefore the total figures for each area of linguistic ability may vary. That respondents were users of either of the two languages does not necessarily imply that they always used their particular skills to the maximum level of their ability. However, since they did actually use their French or German in employment, it can quite safely be assumed that the levels of linguistic performance were the highest attained by them, if their self-assessments were at all accurate.

Tables 11 and 12 portray the numbers and proportions of those respondents who had been identified as users of French and/or German in their work - together with the self-assessment of their level of language ability in the skill areas previously mentioned.

Table 11

*Self-assessed levels of language ability by respondents using French  
in their jobs*

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u> <u>weighted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% *</u>
<b>A. <u>Conversation</u></b>				
Level 1 (low)	10	12	22	21%
Level 2	9	22	31	30%
Level 3	11	22	33	31%
Level 4 (high)	<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>18%</u>
Total	37	68	105	100%
<b>B. <u>Interpreting</u></b>				
Level 1 **	2	8	10	10%
Level 2	8	8	16	16%
Level 3	16	32	48	48%
Level 4	<u>9</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>27%</u>
Total	35	66	101	100%
<b>C. <u>Reading</u></b>				
Level 1	3	2	5	5%
Level 2	14	22	36	35%
Level 3	13	22	35	34%
Level 4	<u>7</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>26%</u>
Total	37	66	103	100%
<b>D. <u>Writing</u></b>				
Level 1	3	4	7	7%
Level 2	15	22	37	37%
Level 3	14	36	50	50%
Level 4	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8%</u>
Total	36	66	102	100%
<b>E. <u>Written translation</u></b>				
Level 1	4	6	10	10%
Level 2	12	18	30	30%
Level 3	16	32	48	48%
Level 4	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13%</u>
Total	37	64	101	100%

\* percentages rounded to whole numbers

\*\* erroneously entered by respondents

Table 12

*Self-assessed levels of language ability by respondents using German  
in their jobs*

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women weighted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% *</u>
<b>A. <u>Conversation</u></b>				
Level 1 (low)	4	8	12	28%
Level 2	3	4	7	16%
Level 3	10	8	18	42%
Level 4 (high)	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>14%</u>
Total	21	22	43	100%
<b>B. <u>Interpreting</u></b>				
Level 1 **	3	4	7	17%
Level 2	4	2	6	14%
Level 3	8	8	16	38%
Level 4	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>31%</u> } 69%
Total	20	22	42	100%
<b>C. <u>Reading</u></b>				
Level 1	2	6	8	19%
Level 2	5	4	9	21%
Level 3	10	8	18	42%
Level 4	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>19%</u> } 63%
Total	21	22	43	100%
<b>D. <u>Writing</u></b>				
Level 1	1	6	7	17%
Level 2	10	4	14	34%
Level 3	6	12	18	44%
Level 4	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5%</u> } 78%
Total	19	22	41	100%
<b>E. <u>Written translation</u></b>				
Level 1	2	4	6	14%
Level 2	6	2	8	19%
Level 3	9	14	23	55%
Level 4	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>12%</u> } 74%
Total	20	22	42	100%

\* percentages rounded to whole numbers

\*\* erroneously entered by respondents

These foreign language users included teachers of French and German. Their particular type of language usage may have skewed the overall pattern and directed it to particular areas of language use. What is, however, apparent is the similarity of the patterns revealed by self-assessment for French and German over the whole range of language activities used. For these foreign language using respondents their self-assessed levels of ability in the various language activities were recorded as follows :

- A. Conversation Respondents are clustered around the lower three levels for both languages but more particularly around levels 2 and 3 for French and level 3 for German.
- B. Interpreting a much more demanding and specialised skill area - surprisingly the majority of the language users assessing themselves at levels 3 or 4.
- C. Reading showed that most respondents assessed themselves as fitting in language ability levels 2 and 3, with the vast majority included in the top three level ranges.
- D. Writing attracted most assessments at levels 2 and 3 with only a few allocating themselves in the top level 4, an expected result.
- E. Written translation had a similar major proportion of language users opting for self-assessment levels 2 and 3.

What can tentatively be inferred from these figures ?

- A. Conversation in the foreign language - users of French and/or German may well have felt their language skills were at the lower levels but could realistically and usefully be employed, particularly in the middle range of levels 2 and 3. A less than native level of speaking, if with a certain amount of fluency and accuracy, could convey the essential meaning of the speaker's message. With aural comprehension skills of the same level effective two-way communication in conversation could and did take place.



B. Interpreting is less likely to be performed satisfactorily at the lower levels. The definitions of the levels of ability (*see appendix*) state that at level 1 (*see tables 11 & 12*) this activity would not be applicable. Nevertheless some respondents assessed themselves at level 1 in error. If a person were not able to convey, at the very least, the gist of the meaning of one person's utterances in a foreign language to another person not understanding the language, then this activity could not reliably be considered as effective interpreting. That so many foreign language respondents opted for levels 3 and 4 can perhaps be attributed to the limitations on the range of subject matter in the definition of this level. Level 2 clearly stated that only interpreting from the foreign language into English was required.

C. Reading with its cluster of respondents at levels 2 and 3 suggests that the permitted support of a dictionary gives confidence to language users so that they opt for level 2. The frequent need for reading-comprehension skills at a level of performance lower than that of native speakers of the language may have encouraged language using respondents to opt for level 3 as most appropriate to their actual experience of work in this language area.

D. Writing Self-assessment was concentrated very clearly at levels 2 and 3, where the definitions of these levels had quite clearly limited the range of expertise. Level 2 allowed use of a dictionary but level 3 required a considerably higher level of competence. If written communication is to be effective, it needs to be accurate but for the non-native language speaker level 4 would be hard to achieve.

E. Written translation Similarly here, as in D, the need to avoid misunderstandings is apparent, if this activity is to be effective. The support of a dictionary was apparently welcomed by those assessing themselves at level 2. However, the preponderance of levels 2 and 3 may well be a result of the requirement to translate only from the foreign language into English, which the language-using respondents may have considered a moderately easy task compared with translating from English into the

foreign language.

### 'A' level subject entries

The success in the 'A' level examinations of the 452 (weighted) respondents was impressively high. There were in all (including French and German) 1,330 passes in Grades A to E at 'A' level. There were 423 candidates i.e. 93.6% of the responding sample had an 'A' level pass in at least one subject other than French and/or German. This was equally true for women as well as men. On average, candidates passed three 'A' level subjects.

There were passes in 22 different subjects. The rank order of the most common 'A' level subjects passed by men and women, apart from French and German, were as follows :

Table 13

*Total subject passes in 'A' level by respondents*

<u>Rank order</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% of all passes</u>
1	English literature	245	18.4%
2	History	151	11.3%
3	General studies	72	5.4%
4	Latin	71	5.3%
5	Geography	53	3.9%
6	Economics	38	2.9%
7	Mathematics	35	2.6%
8	Russian	17	1.3%
9	Spanish	14	1.0%
10	Art	13	0.9%

The men achieved an overall total of 436 'A' level subject passes.

The rank order of the most popular 'A' level subject passes apart from French and German by men in the sample was as follows.

Table 14*Other 'A' level subject passes by male respondents*

<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of passes</u>	<u>% of men</u>
1	English literature	49	11.2%
1	History	49	11.2%
3	Economics	36	8.2%
4	Mathematics	27	6.2%
5	General studies	26	6.0%
6	Latin	19	4.4%
7	Spanish	10	2.3%
8	Geography	9	2.1%
8	Russian	9	2.1%
10	Music	5	1.1%

The women achieved a total of 896 'A' level passes in all subjects. The pattern of the women's most common 'A' level passes differed considerably from the total pattern and from the men's passes after their first five most popular subjects, as can be seen from the rank order of their subject passes.

Table 15*Other 'A' level subject passes by female respondents*

<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of passes</u>	<u>% of women</u>
1	English literature	196	21.9%
2	History	102	11.4%
3	Latin	52	5.8%
4	General studies	46	5.4%
5	Geography	44	4.9%
6	Art	10	1.1%
6	Government	10	1.1%
8	Mathematics	8	0.9%
8	Religious knowledge	8	0.9%
8	Russian	8	0.9%

Whereas Economics and Spanish appear among the subjects preferred by the women, Art, Government and Religious education do not appear among the most popular men's subjects or in the total rank order of the sample. The women's subject choices are more highly concentrated on the first five mentioned: English literature, History, Latin, General studies and Geography. The men, on the other hand, have a much greater emphasis on Mathematics and Economics.

The extent to which the 'A' level subject successes are representative of the general pattern of 'A' level results can best be judged by comparing the survey results with the statistics of the Summer 'A' level results for England and Wales in 1970 in which there were 303,326 subject passes for men and women. French and German are not included in these rank order lists.

Table 16

*Top ten 'A' level subject passes for England and Wales for the Summer 1970--*

<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>% of total entries</u>
1	Mathematics	14.3%
2	English literature	13.6%
3	Physics	9.3%
4	History	8.1%
5	Geography	7.2%
6	Chemistry	7.1%
7	Economics	5.5%
8=	Biology	4.4%
8=	Art	4.4%
10	General studies	3.4%

The other popular subjects among the respondents which do not appear in the more common rank order from the national statistics for 1970 are illustrated below with the percentage of the total subject passes they formed.

Latin	1.4%
Spanish	0.7%
Music	0.6%
Russian	0.2%

These were clearly among the minority subjects in the context of the total passes for England and Wales.

The separate rank order for the ten most popular among men and women of 'A' level subjects other than French and German can be seen from the following extracts from the 1970 Summer results.

Table 17

*Rank order of passes in 'A' level subjects other than French and German from the 180,673 subject passes (men) in the Summer 1970*

<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>% of men's subject passes</u>
1	Mathematics	19.3%
2	Physics	12.9%
3	Chemistry	8.9%
4	English literature	8.3%
5	Economics	7.3%
6	Geography	7.1%
7	History	6.9%
8	General studies	3.9%
9	Biology	3.8%
10	Art	3.1%

A similar table for women from their 122,653 subject passes reveals a different order of priority.

Table 18

*Rank order of passes in 'A' level subjects other than French and German from the 122,653 subject passes (women) in the Summer 1970*

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>% of women's subject passes</u>
1	English literature	21.5%
2	History	10.0%
3	Geography	7.4%
4	Mathematics	7.0%
5	Art	6.3%
6	Biology	5.3%
7	Chemistry	4.3%
8	Physics	3.8%
9=	Religious knowledge	2.5%
9=	Economics	2.5%

In broad terms, excluding the specific science subjects : Physics, Chemistry and Biology, there is a considerable amount of congruence between the subject passes gained by our sample and the total results in the Summer examinations of 1970. The science subjects would clearly be combined and therefore would not be expected to have been studied by our respondents, who were selected because they had a pass in either French and/or German. Latin figures quite highly amongst the passes of our sample, far more so than in the total national results. This is probably because of the linguistic bias in grammar schools where Latin played a greater part than in later comprehensive schools and also because it was a subject studied in combination with modern languages as a requirement for university Romance languages courses.

### Patterns of employment

Over half of our respondents were married : with 67% of the women and 54% of the men married. Of the married women, 56% and of the unmarried, 94% were in full-time employment. There was scarcely any difference between the employment and unemployment rates of married and unmarried men.

Table 19*Proportion of respondents employed*

	<u>Men</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Women</u> <u>weighted</u>	<u>%</u>
Employed	136	94%	212	69%
Unemployed	8	6%	96	31%

So it becomes apparent that almost all of those who have dropped out of full-time employment are women. One element that could have given a truer picture of the complete pattern of all forms of employment would have been an indication of the extent of part-time employment. Such a question had not been included in the questionnaire. Some female respondents commented on its absence, since they found themselves in the situation of being part-time employees, which is an arrangement that can suit married women and particularly those with young children.

The types of jobs that our respondents worked in were classified under the CODOT system (Classification of Occupations and Directory of Occupational Titles). There were 33 types of occupations among the employed respondents of our sample. There were differences in career patterns according to sex. Further or higher qualifications obtained after leaving school in subject areas other than modern languages could have had a decisive effect on career choice. The differing rank orders of the main occupations according to sex are illustrated below.

Table 20

*Occupation of employed respondents*

M E N				W O M E N			
CODOT	Occupation	No.	%	CODOT	Occupation	No.	%
09	Teaching	33	24.3%	09	Teaching	88	41.9%
03	Accountancy, Finance	18	13.2%	10	Social welfare	18	8.6%
06	Occupations supporting management	12	8.8%	06	Occupation supporting management	14	6.7%
07	Administrative posts	10	7.4%	11	Health occupations	14	6.7%
02	Legal occupations	8	5.9%	35	Secretarial plus	10	4.8%
04	Personnel management	5	3.7%	03	Accountancy, Finance	10	4.8%
37	Sales representatives	5	3.7%	07	Administrative posts	8	3.8%
100	General management	5	3.7%	05	Marketing and Advertising	8	3.8%
10	Social welfare	4	2.9%	48	Travel occupations	6	2.9%
15	Literary occupations	4	2.9%	31	Clerical occupations	4	1.9%
19	Translators/Interpreters	4	2.9%	37	Sales representatives	4	1.9%
28	Management in service	4	2.9%	43	Food preparation	4	1.9%
Other		24	17.6%	02	Legal occupations	4	1.9%
				Other		18	8.6%
	Total	136	100%			210	100%
				(weighted)			

Whereas teaching was a common occupation for both men and women, it was predominantly the most popular job for women. Occupations that women, but not men, were engaged in most frequently were : health occupations which included hospital work; higher secretarial posts; marketing, distribution and advertising; travel occupations; clerical posts or posts connected with food preparation.

Men, on the other hand, were represented in various types of management, in literary occupations in such a case as publishing, and they figured more noticeably as translators and interpreters. (The tables quoted exclude those CODOT categories with few entries.) There is a greater number of male employees in such occupations as accountancy/



finance, administration and management.

In order to identify not only the jobs performed by our sample but also the sector of employment they were engaged in, the type of employer's business was coded according to a modified list of Standard Industrial Classification Categories (SICC). As with the CODOT system of classification differences were noted in the sectors of employment chosen by men compared with women.

As has already been noted more women than men became teachers. Since the vast majority of them worked in schools maintained by a local education authority, this sector is clearly the greatest employer of women. Over twice the proportion of women are employed here as compared to men. Local government figures were higher for women than men whereas the converse is true for employment in national government service. The proportions of both sexes working in both the private sector of education or further or higher education are similar. The percentage of women involved in work in medical or dental services is twice that for men.

If all those engaged in the three SICC categories concerned with manufacturing industry and communication for both sexes are combined, it becomes apparent that twice as many men as women are directly employed - in whatever capacity - in manufacturing industry and transport. However, the overall pattern for both sexes leans heavily towards the service sectors of employment. (see table 21).

#### The use of French and German in employment

The essence of this investigation was to discover the extent to which use was made by our respondents of their language skills after they had passed their 'A' level examinations. As has already been stated, it was not expected that a majority of the sample would have used their languages substantially as a major element in their jobs. This fact of a comparatively low percentage of those using their languages, particularly

outside the field of teaching, was already known from the results of the York University enquiry into the use of foreign languages in industry and commerce and its associated survey of the careers of modern language graduates.

Table 21

## Rank order of respondents' sectors of employment

M E N				W O M E N *			
Sector of employment	SICC Code	No.	% of employed	Sector of employment	SICC Code	No.	% of employed
LEA Education service	17	24	17.8%	LEA Education service	17	86	40.2%
National government service	34	17	12.6%	Local government	35	26	12.1%
Metal mechanical, electrical vehicles, engineering etc	04	13	9.6%	Medical services	21	16	7.5%
Local government	35	11	8.1%	National government	34	14	6.5%
Construction, transport, communications	07	9	6.7%	Construction, transport communications	D7	12	5.6%
Accounting, computing services	16	6	4.4%	Private education	18	10	4.7%
Coal, petrol chemicals	03	6	4.4%	Further/Higher education	19	8	3.7%
Further /Higher education	19	5	3.7%	Banking	10	6	2.8%
Legal services	20	5	3.7%	Coal, petrol chemicals	03	4	1.9%
Medical services	21	4	3.0%	Financial institutions	11	4	1.9%
Private education	18	4	3.0%	Advertising & market research	13	4	1.9%
Cinema, theatre, radio	25	4	3.0%	Accounting, computing services	16	4	1.9%
Other		27	20.0%	Other		20	9.3%
Total		135	100%	Total		214	100%

\* Weighted sample

\* Weighted sample

The subject choices at 'A' level of the respondents would have predisposed towards arts courses those (particularly the women) who wanted to continue their education after school. This would tend to give not dissimilar career patterns to those adopted by the modern language graduates in the York University survey. Indeed, as has already been stated, almost 2/5 of the men and over half of the women continued their French studies to some extent after 'A' level.

Therefore, it would have run counter to the evidence to date, if we had expected a very high rate of use of French and German in employment. In the case of the men, bearing in mind the popularity of economics and mathematics for them, we could have expected some variation in the kinds of courses of further or higher education that they followed, which, in turn, would have led them to different careers.

These young people were mainly on the threshold of their careers in the mid to late seventies (1977/78). What become apparent are the differences in the types of career that were followed by men and women. The choice of career will have been made according to the possibilities offered and may well have been limited, among other considerations, by the type of education the applicant had received and by the applicant's sex.

*Rank orders of occupations where French was used by respondents*

M E N				W O M E N *			
CODOT	Category	No.	% of this category	CODOT	Category	No.	% of this category
01	Teaching occupations	16	44.4%	09	Teaching occupations	40	62.5%
19	Translators/Interpreters	3	8.3%	35	Secretarial with administrative duties	8	12.5%
03	Accountancy/Finance	2	5.6%	48	Travel services	6	9.4%
06	Occupations supporting management	2	5.6%	19	Translators/Interpreters	2	3.1%
37	Sales representatives	2	5.6%	05	Marketing & advertising	2	3.1%
100	General management	2	5.6%	24	Aircraft/Ship officers	2	3.1%
04	Management & organisation	1	2.8%	30	Receptionist	2	3.1%
15	Publishing/Editing	1	2.8%	37	Sales representatives	2	3.1%
21	Natural science occupations	1	2.8%				
24	Aircraft & ships officers	1	2.8%				
27	Management in Industry & transport	1	2.8%				
35	Secretarial with administrative duties	1	2.8%				
36	Retail sales	1	2.8%				
48	Travel services	1	2.8%				
93	Road transport	1	2.8%				
Total		36	100%	Total		64	100%
Weighted sample *							

Percentages have been rounded and do not exactly total a 100%.

Further and/or higher study of French after 'A' level and its use in employment

Among these users of French there was a far greater number who had pursued further and/or higher study of the language.

Table 23

*Post 'A' level study of respondents using French in employment*

	<u>Men</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
With further/higher study after 'A' level	24	67%	54	84%	78	78%
No further/higher study of French	<u>12</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>22%</u>
	36	100%	64	100%	100	100%

The majority of the qualifications gained through further and/or higher studies post 'A' level, were university arts degrees or teaching qualifications. Other professional qualifications obtained by this category of French users were in comparatively small numbers. This may be the reason why so few women without further French qualifications used their language in their job i.e. a large proportion of them (70%) went into teaching for which a degree or teaching qualification is a prerequisite. A smaller proportion of men went into teaching and, when using their French, they did so in a wider range of occupations. Thus unimproved 'A' level French language skills were used by only just over a fifth of all the French language users in employment, but with a higher proportion among the men than among the women.

Table 24

*Use of 'A' level French in employment by respondents with no higher study*

<u>Type of job</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Accountancy, finance	2	-
Personnel management	1	-
Marketing and advertising	-	2
Teaching occupations	1	2
Literary occupations	1	-
Interpreters	1	-
Natural sciences	1	-
Reception occupations	-	2
Secretarial plus	1	2
Buyer selling occupations	1	-
Personal travel	1	2
General management	2	-

As has been illustrated, it is the holder of an 'A' level in French who has pursued further or higher studies who is more likely to use the language in employment. What is perhaps very pertinent is the type of job in which unimproved 'A' level French is used, as shown on the table above.

Further and/or higher study of German after 'A' level and its use in employment

The situation regarding the use of German in employment, with or without further study after 'A' level is not dissimilar to the pattern for French, although the smaller numbers make it difficult to be confident of the proportions.

Table 25

*Post 'A' level study of respondents using German in employment*

	<u>Men</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
With further/higher study after 'A' level	13	62%	18	75%	31	69%
No further/higher study of German	8	38%	6	25%	14	31%
	21	100%	24	100%	45	100%

Again as with French, a very much higher proportion of those using German in their job had followed a course of further or higher study of the language, although not quite to the same extent as for French, which suggests greater use of unimproved 'A' level German skills particularly by men. Whereas teaching accounted for a very high proportion of women with higher qualifications using French, less than half of the women employed and using German were teachers. They used their higher qualifications in German over a small range of other occupations.

Just as respondents with unimproved 'A' level French used it less than those who had studied the language further, the pattern as we have seen is the same for German. The range of jobs in which unimproved 'A' level German was used is illustrated in the following table.

Table 26

*Use of 'A' level German in employment by respondents with no higher study*

<u>Type of job</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Accountancy, finance	1	-
Personnel management	1	-
Marketing and advertising	-	2
Support management	1	-
Interpreters	1	-
Sales representatives	1	2
Armed forces	1	-
Personal travel	-	2
Rail transport	1	-



Table 27

The pattern of employment for German mirrors that for French to a considerable extent. (see table 27).

*Rank orders of occupations where German was used by respondents*

CODOT	M E N		W O M E N *		No.	% of this category	No.	% of this category
	CODOT	Category	CODOT	Category				
	09	Teaching occupations	09	Teaching occupations	8	33.3%		
	06	Occupations supporting management	48	Travel services	6	25.0%		
	19	Translators/Interpreters	05	Marketing and Advertising	2	8.3%		
	04	Management and organisation	19	Translators/Interpreters	2	8.3%		
	03	Accountancy/Finance	30	Receptionists	2	8.3%		
	15	Publishing/Editing	35	Secretarial and administrative duties	2	8.3%		
	36	Retail sales	37	Sales representatives	2	8.3%		
	37	Sales representatives						
	40	Armed forces						
	92	Rail transport						
	100	General management						
		Total		Total	24	100%		
		* Weighted sample						

Percentages have been rounded and do not exactly total a 100%.

Table 28

*Proportion of respondents using French in employment*

	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women*</u>
(a) Using French in job	38	(c) Using French in job	68
(b) Total men employed	136	(d) Total women employed	210
(a) expressed as % of (b)	27.9%	(c) expressed as % of (d)	32.4%
*weighted sample			

What is evident is the higher percentage of women who used French in employment compared to men. Of these employees using French, four women and two men had not passed the 'A' level French examination.

Jobs in which French was most commonly used

Not all of those using French in their jobs indicated their occupations clearly but 64 (weighted) women and 36 men did so. The overall pattern for men and women concentrated the types of job where French was used on a very small number of categories; this is more in evidence for women than for men.

Table 29

*Rank orders of most common job categories in which French was used by men and women respondents*

	<u>CODOT</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Categories</u>
1	09	56	Teaching occupations
2	35	9	Secretarial with administrative duties
3	48	7	Travel services
4	19	5	Translators, interpreters, linguists
5	37	4	Sales representatives
6	24	3	Aircraft and ship's offices
7	03	2	Accountancy and finance
7	06	2	Occupations supporting management
7	100	2	General management
(weighted)			

There were also eight job types each with only one representative, either a man or a woman. The heavy bias towards teaching as a profession in which French was used - accounting for over half of those using this language - was not entirely unexpected, since this was one of the conclusions of the York survey of modern language graduates. However, this bias towards teaching seems to indicate some limitation of career choices among those respondents intending to use French in their work. Table 22 presents the range of individual occupations for both sexes.

The sample design of this project had optimistically proceeded on the assumption that at least 15% of those with French 'A' level and employed outside teaching would be using their French without further or higher study of the language. In fact only just under 5% of the employed women but almost 9% of the employed men without post 'A' level study of French used this language in their job. These figures are much below what had been estimated in the sample design.

The pattern of occupations where French was used is limited when compared to the whole range of occupations of the employed respondents. In the case of women, it was mainly (almost two-thirds) dominated by teaching. Secretarial occupations, together with travel services, afforded the only other jobs with more than two respondents using French. The pattern of choice of job types for men is far less reliant on teaching and provides a wide range of managerial posts and specialist services including slightly more professional translators and interpreters than for women.

Relative importance of the language activities

Table 30

*Rank orders of the nine French and German linguistic activities engaged in by employed respondents using French and/or German*

<u>French</u>	<u>% of those employed using French</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>% of those employed using German</u>
1=Reading	} 42%	1. Reading	18%
1=Interpreting from French		2. Interpreting from German	15%
3=Conversation	} 32%	3. Conversation	14%
3=Writing French		4. Written translation from German	11%
5. Written translation from French	29%	5=Writing German	} 10%
6. Written translation into French	26%	5=Interpreting into German	
7. Interpreting into French	25%	7=Written translation into German	} 8%
8. Telephoning in French	15%	7=Telephoning in German	
9. Typing in French	8%	9. Typing in German	4%
(Weighted sample N = 106)		(Weighted sample N = 45)	

The rank orders of these activities in both French and German coincides quite closely. Reading (with understanding) of material in the foreign language is the most frequently cited activity. What is interesting is the possible inter-relationship between conversation and interpreting from the foreign language into English. These two different, but related activities, involving the oral language, figure highly. Clearly there is a requirement for two-way oral communication in the foreign language but also the related need to interpret for non-speakers of the foreign language. Aural comprehension of the foreign language is also a required skill. Writing in the foreign language and written translation from the language rank higher overall than translating into and interpreting into the foreign language. Telephoning and typing are the least frequent activities.

The fact that a high proportion of those using French were teachers, particularly women, influenced the overall pattern of the recorded use of French. Apart from telephoning and typing in French, teachers predominated in the categories of use for one hour or more per week in the other seven areas of language skill use.

Table 31

*French language activities used by respondents who were teachers  
(more than one hour per week)*

Written translation into French	86%	N = 29
Writing in French	82%	N = 45
Written translation from French	80%	N = 30
Conversation	78%	N = 59
Reading	69%	N = 52
Interpreting into French	65%	N = 34
Interpreting from French	63%	N = 28

The top three language activities of writing and translating correspond closely to teaching activities rather than language use for communication. The involvement in all the other language activities by foreign language using employees other than teachers fell mainly into the category of 'Occasional use'.

Respondents' views on importance of the various language skills in employment

Most of the questions the respondents were asked required factual answers. At the end of the questionnaire an opportunity was given to the respondents to assess the value in employment of the various language skills. Over half (57%) of the total weighted sample answered this question for French and nearly a quarter (24%) for German. They were asked to rank in order of importance in their career up to that time, seven language skills. By averaging out their replies the rank order appeared as illustrated below. The complete congruence of the hierarchy

of skills in both languages is evident in the value placed on them by the respondents.

Table 32

*Rank orders of importance of French and German language skills in employment by respondents*

<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>
1. Conversation	1. Conversation
2. Reading	2. Reading
3. Interpreting from French	3. Interpreting from German
4. Writing in French	4. Writing in German
5. Written translation from French	5. Written translation from German
6. Interpreting into French	6. Interpreting into German
7. Translating into French	7. Translating into German

A comparison between the above tables and the actual use of the various language skills by employees reveals a difference in emphasis. The respondents considered conversation to be the most important activity, whereas those actually using the languages in their job reported reading in the foreign language to be the most frequent activity. This apparent divergence may be explained by the fact that, in employment, face to face conversation occurs with less frequency than reading, but the conversational skills are perceived as being on occasions more urgent. Where there is agreement between these two tables is that translating from the foreign language, interpreting from the foreign language and writing in the foreign language are more important than translating or interpreting into the foreign language.

#### Leisure use of French and German

Whereas nine areas of possible language activity were surveyed in connexion with employment only five potential areas of use were itemised for possible leisure activities. The rank order of involvement in these activities illustrates the more frequently used linguistic skills.

Table 33 illustrates the leisure use of French and German by all respondents

with and without 'A' level in the language and including those with further or higher study of the two languages.

Table 33

*Rank orders of frequency of leisure activities in French and German  
by respondents*

<u>French</u>	<u>% of all respondents</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>% of all respondents</u>
Conversation	81%	Conversation	36%
Reading	74%	Reading	31%
Watching TV or films	66%	Watching TV or films	24%
Writing	46%	Writing	19%
Visits to French clubs	6%	Visits to German clubs	3%
(weighted sample N = 452)			

The leisure use of both French and German provides a similar pattern. Whereas 'reading in the foreign language' ranked as the first frequent activity in the work situation, it comes a close second in leisure use. Conversational use of the foreign language is most probably in the area of holiday visits to the foreign country. Watching foreign films in the cinema or on television ranks more highly than writing in the foreign language. It must, however, be stated that the majority use of these different language activities occurs occasionally rather than regularly or frequently.

A closer examination of the overall hierarchy of types of French and German language activity occurring in leisure reveals a markedly different pattern of use by those with further or higher study of the language after passing 'A' level, compared with those whose language study stopped at 'A' level. The proportion of respondents that have been involved in these activities at any level of frequency from occasionally to regularly or frequently, can be seen in Table 34, together with their level of study of the languages. Understandably, those with post 'A' level study in the languages used them far more

for leisure purposes than those without post 'A' level study.

Table 34

*Percentage of respondents using French or German for leisure purposes*

<u>French</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
<u>In conversation</u>			<u>In conversation</u>		
No study after 'A' level	67%	69%	No study after 'A' level	27%	25%
Further/higher study	93%	95%	Further/higher study	87%	82%
<u>In reading</u>			<u>In reading</u>		
No study after 'A' level	45%	61%	No study after 'A' level	23%	19%
Further/higher study	96%	94%	Further/higher study	87%	79%
<u>In watching TV and films</u>			<u>In watching TV and films</u>		
No study after 'A' level	44%	59%	No study after 'A' level	17%	12%
Further/higher study	73%	82%	Further/higher study	71%	71%
<u>In writing in language</u>			<u>In writing in language</u>		
No study after 'A' level	25%	27%	No study after 'A' level	12%	9%
Further/higher study	69%	68%	Further/higher study	62%	57%
<u>In visiting French clubs</u>			<u>In visiting German clubs</u>		
No study after 'A' level	1%	1%	No study after 'A' level	2%	1%
Further/higher study	15%	11%	Further/higher study	8%	14%
(French 'A' level only N = 203)(German 'A' level only N = 70)					
(French further/higher study N = 213)(German further/higher study N = 80)					
(Weighted sample)					

Very few of the sample actively sought to utilise their language skills by attending French or German clubs. Those who did were very largely those with continued study of the languages after leaving school.

Women without further study in French were more involved in leisure activities using the language than men in the same category. This tendency is particularly noticeable in reading French and watching films and TV programmes in French. The balance of involvement in these various activities by both men and women is much more even for those who continued study of French after 'A' level.



Overall, as has been already stated, there is a marked clustering of the users of the various language skills for leisure purposes in the category of occasional use rather than in those of regular use or frequent use. However, of those with further or higher study in French, from a fifth to a third fell into the categories of regular or frequent use. Conversation was highest in the category of frequent use followed by reading, writing and watching TV and films. However, nine-tenths of the users without further French study were in the occasional use category in most type of leisure use of French. Respondents with further or higher study of French used this language more regularly and frequently for leisure purposes than those with an unimproved 'A' level.

In German used in leisure activities, there was a higher proportion of those with further German studies who were regularly or frequently involved in reading or conversing in that language than was the case for French. For those with German without further study, a comparatively higher proportion was engaged in regular or frequent leisure use of conversation and reading of German than was the case for French.

Overall, there was a comparatively higher proportion of those with German using their skills in leisure regularly or frequently, both with or without further studies, than there was for French. Perhaps this may stem from the fact that in the school context German is more frequently an optional subject which some pupils choose to study, whereas French is more widely available without an element of choice. Even at sixth form level, French may be studied as a second or third 'A' level to complete a course of study, but German would involve a greater element of choice on the part of the pupils. Maybe choice can be equated with interest in the language and possible desire to use it. But, of course, there are far fewer pupils who study German to 'A' level.

Respondents' assessment of the use of various language skills  
for leisure purposes

The respondents were asked to assess the usefulness of the four main areas of language activity. Listening, speaking, reading and writing in both French and German. A four point scale :

- (i) Essential
- (ii) Useful
- (iii) Occasionally useful
- (iv) No use

was devised and produced the following weighted results.

Table 35

*Respondents' ranking of usefulness of French in leisure*

<u>Listening</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Speaking</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Writing</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Essential	108	24%	Essential	106	24%	Essential	83	18%	Essential	45	10%
Useful	140	31%	Useful	123	27%	Useful	142	31%	Useful	104	23%
Occasionally useful	133	29%	Occasionally useful	141	31%	Occasionally useful	153	34%	Occasionally useful	161	36%
No use	71	16%	No use	82	18%	No use	74	17%	No use	142	31%
	452	100%		452	100%		452	100%		452	100%
(Weighted sample)											

Percentages have been rounded to whole figures.

It is necessary to take into account the fact that 8% of the respondents had not passed 'A' level French and so may not have proceeded beyond 'O' level, or they could have attempted 'A' level and failed. Nevertheless, over 80% of the respondents found some use for the skills of listening, speaking and reading. Writing was overall the least valued, and listening was the most highly valued, followed by speaking and reading.

As was to be expected, the occasional use of each of the skills predominated.

These assessments of the use of French in leisure pursuits correspond very closely to the reported use of the language in leisure. Whereas these assessments are based on four skill areas, the record of leisure use was based on five activities. There is, nevertheless, a pattern emerging in that listening and speaking in these tables and conversation, in the table of actual use, head the list followed by reading, with writing in French the least valued activity.

Whereas 92% of the respondents were holders of an 'A' level in French, only a third of the respondents had passed 'A' level German, therefore the majority of the respondents would most probably not have learned German, and could therefore not have used it in leisure pursuits. The figures reveal that more than a third had some German as their following assessments of its use in leisure showed.

Table 36

*Respondents' ranking of usefulness of German in leisure*

<u>Listening</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Speaking</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Writing</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Essential	37	8%	Essential	37	8%	Essential	37	8%	Essential	22	5%
Useful	59	13%	Useful	49	11%	Useful	58	13%	Useful	49	11%
Occasionally useful	75	17%	Occasionally useful	80	18%	Occasionally useful	68	15%	Occasionally useful	66	14%
No use	281	62%	No use	286	63%	No use	289	64%	No use	315	70%
	452	100%		452	100%		452	100%		452	100%
(Weighted sample)											

It is interesting to note that the numbers of replies to this question exceeds the number of respondents with 'A' level German. This can be interpreted as additional interest in German by those who had studied German other than for 'A' level at school or in further or higher education.

The respondents' assessments of the use of these skills uniformly rank occasional use as the most common type of use. Again listening, speaking and reading are the most frequently used skills, and writing the least used. These correspond closely to the higher rating of conversation, reading and watching TV or films and the lower rating of writing as reported by respondents in their actual use of German in leisure pursuits.

Free comments by respondents

There were 192 (weighted) respondents who chose to make at least one comment at the end of the questionnaire. The respondents had been encouraged to make any comment they wished; no guidelines had been laid down. These 192 represented 42% of the sample. The comments were divided into 75 different categories and up to three different statements were recorded from any one questionnaire.

Table 37*Free comments by respondents*

<u>Comments concerning French</u>	<u>No. of respondents commenting</u>
1. Criticism of the lack of emphasis on oral French 'A' level	40
2. French found to be useful on holiday	23
3. French not used in employment but respondents would like to use it	17
4. Learning French was not a wasted activity, respondent appreciated learning the language	16
5. French enabled the respondents to keep in touch with French native speakers	14
6. The discipline needed for learning French was of immense value for other things	11
7. French in college course highly criticised as inadequate	10
8. French was spasmodically useful in job	9
9. French considered useful as a commonly used foreign language in certain parts of the world	7
10. Too much emphasis on literature in French 'A' level	6
<u>Comments concerning German</u>	
1. German useful on holiday	11
2= German in college course highly criticised as inadequate	10
2= Criticism of the lack of emphasis on oral German at 'A' level	10
4. German not used in job but respondent would like to use it	8
5. Learning German was not a wasted activity respondent appreciated learning it	6
6. Possession of German 'A' level is an additional qualification and shows respondent's level of education	5
7= German enabled the respondents to keep in touch with German native speakers	3
7= German was useful in job	3
<u>General comments</u>	
1= Foreign languages are useful only in London	4
1= Having learned French or German was useful for teaching English as a foreign language	4
3. Travelling to the countries of the languages pupils are learning is essential	3

The preceding 21 comments were the most frequently expressed of a total of 75 different comments. The overall impression is one of considerable dissatisfaction with the lack of emphasis on the oral language in both the French and German 'A' level courses. Further criticism is expressed at the content of some post 'A' level college courses in French and German. The other criticism was of the amount of French literature at 'A' level.

There was, however, a general satisfaction with having learned either French or German although these languages were used more for leisure purposes than in employment. Those who mentioned that they had not used their languages in their job did so with an element of regret. An interesting comment was the transfer value of French and German for those who went on to teach English as a foreign language.

The following quotations from the free comments are put forward to exemplify the widespread criticism of the lack of emphasis on oral skills in the 'A' level language examinations.

1. "In my opinion 'A' level French completely ignores what is for most people the most useful skill, the ability to communicate orally."
2. "French learned at school with 'Whitmarsh' left only a reserve of conjugated verbs and '1066' type remembered constructions."
3. "Having followed an 'A' level course, and not having ever intended to follow a 'language route' in further education, I now feel that the literature emphasis was too high. An examination language course with more 'conversational' content would have been of far more use to me in retrospect."
4. "I think that anyone who attains 'A' level standard in a language ought to be able to converse fluently in that language (and not just pass an oral test of dubious merit)."



5. "We English are afraid of speaking in a foreign language whereas our counterparts in France and Germany enjoy and want to speak English. This is the result of too many years of studying from books and learning a language by writing essays and written translations. Communication by word of mouth is far more useful and future language courses would do well to remember this."
6. "When I was posted to France (not because of my 'A' level but because I happened to be in the right place at the right time) I expected to cope well. On the contrary, I found myself struck dumb in face of an incomprehensible babble. My schoolboy phrases were in no way adapted to life in France."
7. "I have found the French and German tuition and the skills achieved in those languages to be totally inadequate, and moreover, wrongly biased, for application in a modern business environment. Far more emphasis is required on conversation and on more contemporary socio-economic aspects. Even for leisure use, the conversational skills are very inadequate."
8. "My French 'A' level has been of little or no use to me in the pursuit of my career or leisure activities. I put this down in large part, to the tedious nature of the 'A' level course which 'frightened' one off French for life! The stress placed on use of English in the course, rather than conversational French, did nothing to give me confidence in the subject, and I rejected the subject as soon as I left school."

## CHAPTER FOUR

Summary of conclusionsTechniques used

The intention of this enquiry was to survey, by means of a postal questionnaire, a sample of holders of 'A' level passes in French and/or German for the years 1967/70. The main aim was to see how they had subsequently used their French and German language in employment and/or leisure. The sampling method used, i.e. concentrating on schools with a large number of 'A' level candidates in these two subjects, probably introduced a bias in favour of more successful candidates in terms of higher grades at 'A' level. The sample also produced a smaller percentage of respondents using their unimproved 'A' level language skills than had been anticipated. In the event, only 22% of those using French and 31% of those using German in employment were using unimproved 'A' level language skills.

It had been hoped to obtain a 60% response rate in the survey. The 55% response achieved was, nonetheless, acceptable. The methods used for the data collection proved successful.

The computer analysis of the data was effective but could, with hindsight, have been more refined. This was particularly so in the case of some tables concerning the use of German by holders of 'A' level in that language, where the analysis of the proportions of users of German has been related, in some instances, to the total sample, rather than to those with an 'A' level in German.

ResultsUse of French and German in employment

1. The self-assessed levels of language ability in French and German by those using these languages in their employment were clustered

in the middle two levels : 2 and 3 (*see tables 11 and 12*) for most of the skill areas, with the exception of interpreting. Here the levels were mainly 3 and 4 i.e. higher for a taxing linguistic activity, and only effectively performed by people with specialised skills. In general, those using French or German in employment rated themselves as having considerable competence in these languages.

2. The proportion of employed women using French, at all, was 32% and of employed men using French 28% (*table 28*). Of those using French in their jobs 84% of the women and 67% of the men had done some post 'A' level study of the language (*table 23*). The most common occupation of users of French was teaching for both men and women. Thereafter the occupations varied according to sex (*table 22*).
3. Of those using German in employment 75% of the women and 62% of the men had done some post 'A' level study of German (*table 25*). Although teaching was the commonest occupation where German was used (*table 27*) proportionately it formed a smaller occupational category than for teachers of French.
4. The most frequently cited linguistic activities used in employment for both French and German (*table 30*) were :
  - (i) Reading
  - (ii) Interpreting from the foreign language
  - (iii) Conversation
5. However, when the same employees were asked to rate these skills in importance (*table 32*), as opposed to frequency, the rank order became :
  - (i) Conversation
  - (ii) Reading
  - (iii) Interpreting from the foreign language

## Leisure use of French and German

6. The most frequently cited activities (*table 33*) in French and German for leisure purposes were :

- (i) Conversation
- (ii) Reading
- (iii) Watching TV and films

7. In leisure use of the two languages (*table 34*), there was a markedly greater use by those with post 'A' level study of French and more particularly of those with post 'A' level study of German, than by those who did not study the languages beyond 'A' level. This was true for all of the skill areas. Nevertheless a high proportion of all respondents, e.g. 80% for French, made some use of the foreign language for leisure purposes, and two-thirds of those with unimproved 'A' level French used French for conversational purposes, and half read or watched TV or films in French.

### Free comments

8. In the area of free comments by the respondents concerning both French and German the following were the most frequent :

- (i) Criticism of the lack of adequate oral content in the 'A' level course
- (ii) The usefulness of the languages for holiday purposes
- (iii) French and/or German was not used in employment, but the respondent would like to use it.
- (iv) Learning French and/or German was not a wasted activity - the respondent enjoyed it.

### Points emerging

In general the results concerning the use of French and German in employment showed :

- (i) a very limited use of unimproved 'A' level language skills

- (ii) a high proportion of French and German users were teachers
- (iii) in varying rank order : reading, interpreting from the foreign language and conversation as the most used, or the most important, skills.

In leisure use conversation, reading and watching TV and films were most frequently quoted.

The free comments showed :

- (i) a concern for oral communication and the lack of its importance in the 'A' level examination
- (ii) a desire to use the languages in employment and
- (iii) their usefulness on holiday.

The 'A' level syllabuses in French and German at the time when the respondents of this survey took their 'A' level examinations (1967-70) were not, in the main, concerned with the practical language skills of real communication. Emphasis was placed on the transmission of the foreign language and culture as a body of knowledge. The examination then usually consisted of

- (i) translation into the foreign language
- (ii) translation into English
- (iii) writing a short essay in the foreign language
- (iv) the study of four literary texts
- (v) a dictation and
- (vi) a short oral examination.

The examination requirements tended to shape what was done in the classroom. The use of the foreign language in the sixth form classroom, except by the foreign language assistant, was the exception rather than the rule. It was against this background that our survey of the practical use made of French or German in either employment or leisure was made. The current

situation is not much different apart from the addition of listening comprehension as an additional test in some 'A' level foreign language examinations.

What this survey has illustrated is the considerable, if not gross, mismatch between the emphasis on the language skills the 'A' level language examinations test and the language skills, particularly those of conversation and reading in the foreign language, that are subsequently used in either employment or leisure.

It is encouraging that some 'A' level boards, in particular the Joint Matriculation Board, are actively seeking to revise the pattern of skills which they examine. Emphasis on oral, reading and written communicative skills in the foreign language corresponds more nearly to actual subsequent use in employment and leisure.

In the British educational system without national curricula, examination syllabuses are the equivalent to national curricula found in other countries. New school examinations are, therefore, the only way to change the content of the teaching so that it matches up to the needs of those learning the languages. This survey provides ample evidence of the need for change.

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A Level Languages Survey

# Questionnaire

**University of York Language Teaching Centre**



# Use of French and/or German in Employment and Leisure by former 'A' level candidates

The information sought in this questionnaire is aimed at discovering the extent to which former 'A' level candidates in French and/or German use these languages in subsequent employment and leisure.

The questionnaire has been designed to follow logically through from details of the individual to details of the respondent's use of languages in employment and leisure. Since the aim has been to obtain precise information, some areas of language activity have been dealt with from different angles in successive questions. It will, therefore, be most helpful if you read through the whole questionnaire before answering the questions. PLEASE USE THE BLANK PAGES OPPOSITE THE QUESTIONS TO PROVIDE THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

If any question is not applicable to you - please leave it blank.

University of York  
Language Teaching Centre  
The King's Manor  
YORK YO1 2EP

Please read through the whole questionnaire before answering

Q.1 In which year were you born ?

19

Q.2 Please state whether male or female

Male

Female

Q.3 Is your mother tongue English ?

Yes

No

Q.4 If No, what is your mother tongue ?

Q.5 Are you married ?

Yes

No

Q.6 If Yes, is the mother tongue of your wife or husband English ?

Yes

No

Q.7 If No, what is the mother tongue of your wife or husband ?

Q.8 Do you have any children ?

Yes

No

Q.9 Where do you live now ? Please state nearest town in the UK or (if living abroad) which country

Q.10 Grade obtained at 'A' level in French

Q.11 Grade obtained at 'A' level in German

Q.12 Subjects of other 'A' level passes

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**Please use this side if necessary for additional information relating to the questions opposite.**

**Write your answers in the spaces provided. Do not write on the questions opposite.**

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**Write your answers in the spaces provided. Do not write on the questions opposite.**

Q.13 If you have taken any further course(s) of study involving French since leaving school, please indicate below the course, type of institution attended, dates of qualification.

Course		
Subjects studied in course		
Nature & extent of French studied in course		
Qualifications obtained or aimed at		
Dates of qualifications obtained or expected		

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31		32	
33		34	
35		36	
37		38	
39		40	
41		42	

Q.14 If you have taken any further course(s) of study involving German since leaving school, please indicate below the course, type of institution attended, dates of qualification.

Course		
Subjects studied in course		
Nature & extent of German studied in course		
Qualifications obtained or aimed at		
Dates of qualifications obtained or expected		

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45		46	
47		48	
49		50	
51		52	
53		54	
55		56	

Q.15 Please now give details of further studies not involving French and German but including other languages undertaken since leaving school.

Course		
Subjects studied in course (including language component)		
Nature & extent of languages studied in course		
Qualifications obtained or aimed at		
Dates of qualifications obtained or expected		

57		58	
59		60	
61		62	
63		64	
65		66	
67		68	
69		70	
71		72	



**Please use this side if necessary for additional information relating to the questions opposite.**

Q.16 If you have included a language in Q.15, Yes ☐ No ☐  
did your study of French and/or German  
help ?

Q.17 Have you lived abroad (other than on  
holiday) for a period longer than three Yes ☐ No ☐  
months ?

Q.18 If yes, please give a) country   
b) length of time

Q.19 Are you in full-time employment at the Yes ☐ No ☐  
moment ?

Q.20 If Yes, please give below brief details  
of your present post :  
  
Type of employment :   
(e.g. Engineering firm; local  
education authority)  
  
Title of post :   
(e.g. Secretary, Export  
Sales Manager)

Q.21 Give details of previous employment in which French and/or  
German have been used.

<u>Starting</u> <u>date</u>	<u>Finishing</u> <u>date</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Languages</u> Please indicate whether : Essential - E Useful - U Occasionally Useful - O
<u>Example</u> 1972	1974	SCHOOLTEACHER	FRENCH (E) GERMAN (E) SPANISH (O)

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## Levels of language ability

### A Conversation

- Level 1**     **Understanding the spoken language:** Ability to understand a native speaker in simple conversational situations on everyday matters familiar to both parties; ability to master telephone procedure, with comprehension of numerals.  
**Speaking:** Ability to carry on simple conversation, although expressed imperfectly, on every day matters familiar to both parties; ability to issue set instructions learned in advance, telephone operating, making announcements on P.A. system.
- Level 2**     **Understanding the spoken language:** Ability to understand a native speaker at normal speed in general conversation.  
**Speaking:** Ability to carry on a conversation quite fluently, although not necessarily completely accurately, on most topics of general conversation.
- Level 3**     **Speaking and understanding the spoken language:** Ability to converse with ease on any subject and to understand films, radio programmes and telephone conversations almost as in the speaker's native language.
- Level 4**     Ability to converse as in the speaker's native language.

### B Interpreting

- Level 1**     Not applicable in this case.
- Level 2**     Ability to interpret **from** the foreign language **only**, a sentence at a time and within a limited range of subject matter, given adequate preparation.
- Level 3**     Ability to undertake occasional interpreting **From** the foreign language in units of 2-3 sentences within previously defined ranges of subject matter; and with less confidence, from English **into** the foreign language.
- Level 4**     Ability to undertake (a) ad hoc interpreting **from** and **into** the foreign language without notes, in units of 2-3 sentences, and/or (b) conference interpreting i.e. consecutive, simultaneous or whispered interpreting, usually **from** the foreign language **only**, of speeches and discussions at meetings normally of more than five participants.

### C Reading

- Level 1**     Ability to read (with the aid of a dictionary) routine business communications and routine sales and technical literature.
- Level 2**     Ability to read (with only occasional use of a dictionary) literature within the reader's specialised field.
- Level 3**     Ability to read with ease almost as in the reader's native language; this pre-supposes a knowledge of the institutions and culture of the country concerned.
- Level 4**     Ability to read as in the reader's native language.

### D Writing

- Level 1**     Ability to write (with the aid of a dictionary) only stereotyped routine letters using a very limited vocabulary.
- Level 2**     Ability to write (with the occasional use of a dictionary) personal letters and simple descriptive matter without gross error.
- Level 3**     Ability to write competently, almost as in the writer's native language. This pre-supposes a knowledge of the institutions and culture of the country concerned.
- Level 4**     Ability to write as in the writer's native language.

### E Written Translation

**Note:** Translators may be called upon to translate both from and into the foreign language. The following definitions refer to translation **FROM** the foreign language **ONLY**, in accordance with recommended professional practice.

- Level 1**     Ability to translate (with the aid of a dictionary) **from** the foreign language, routine business communications.
- Level 2**     Ability to translate (with the occasional use of the dictionary) **from** the foreign language, literature within the translator's own specialised field.
- Level 3**     Ability to translate with ease **from** the foreign language, in a wide range of subject matter.
- Level 4**     Ability to translate **from** the foreign language, with ease on a wide range of subjects including colloquial and specialist technical material.

Q.22 Please tick your level of ability in French and/or German.  
For your assistance, you will find opposite a guide to  
levels of ability; the numbers on our table below (1-4)  
relate to the numbers given to the various levels.

	French					German			
Do you use this language in your present job ?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
A. Conversation :	1 2 3 4					1 2 3 4			
Level of ability (Please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Interpreting :	1 2 3 4					1 2 3 4			
Level of ability (Please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Reading :	1 2 3 4					1 2 3 4			
Level of ability (Please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Writing :	1 2 3 4					1 2 3 4			
Level of ability (Please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Written translation :	1 2 3 4					1 2 3 4			
Level of ability (Please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

40 ☐ 46 ☐

41 ☐ 47 ☐

42 ☐ 48 ☐

43 ☐ 49 ☐

44 ☐ 50 ☐

45 ☐ 51 ☐



**Please use this side if necessary for additional information relating to the questions opposite.**

Blank area for additional information.

Q.23 Use of French and/or German in present employment  
(Please tick appropriate box)

	French	German
1. <u>Conversation face to face</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
2. <u>Conversation on the telephone</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
3. <u>Interpreting from foreign language</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
4. <u>Interpreting into foreign language</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
5. <u>Reading</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
6. <u>Writing</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
7. <u>Written translation from foreign language</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
8. <u>Written translation into foreign language</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		
9. <u>Typing in the foreign language</u>		
a) none		
b) occasional		
c) at least one hour per week on average		
d) more than one hour per week		

52 ☐ 61 ☐

53 ☐ 62 ☐

54 ☐ 63 ☐

55 ☐ 64 ☐

56 ☐ 65 ☐

57 ☐ 66 ☐

58 ☐ 67 ☐

59 ☐ 68 ☐

60 ☐ 69 ☐

**Please use this side if necessary for additional information relating to the questions opposite.**

Blank area for additional information.

Q.24 Use of French and/or German for leisure purposes

1. <u>Conversation (in connection with holidays abroad or other purposes)</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>
a) none	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
b) occasional	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
c) regular	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
d) frequent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2. <u>Reading</u>		
a) none	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
b) occasional	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
c) regular	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
d) frequent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3. <u>Writing</u>		
a) none	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
b) occasional	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
c) regular	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
d) frequent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4. <u>Watching TV or films</u>		
a) none	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
b) occasional	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
c) regular	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
d) frequent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5. <u>French or German clubs</u>		
a) none	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
b) occasional	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
c) regular	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
d) frequent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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14  19

**Please use this side if necessary for additional information relating to the questions opposite.**

Q.25 Please indicate the order in which you have found the seven foreign language activities - Conversation, Interpreting both ways, Reading, Writing and Written Translation both ways - to be of value in your career to date.

(1 most important - 7 least important)

Conversation  
Interpreting from foreign language  
Interpreting into foreign language  
Reading  
Writing  
Written translation from foreign language  
Written translation into foreign language

<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>

20		27	
21		28	
22		29	
23		30	
24		31	
25		32	
26		33	

Q.26 How useful have the language skills you have learnt been in your leisure activities in the foreign language ?

Please indicate whether :            Essential - E  
   Useful     - U  
   Occasionally Useful - O  
   No Use     - N

Listening  
Speaking  
Reading  
Writing

<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>

34		38	
35		39	
36		40	
37		41	

**Please use this side if necessary for additional information relating to the questions opposite.**

27 Having completed this questionnaire, if you have any comments to add, on the subjects covered or on other matters, we shall be most interested. Please write them in the space below :

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44	

The research team is very grateful for your help with this inquiry. Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed R E E P O S T envelope. No stamp is required within the U.K. as this envelope is pre-paid. Please return to :

Keith Emmans  
University of York  
The King's Manor  
FREEPOST  
York YO1 2EP  
(Tel : 0904 59861 Ext. 840)

Thank you once again for your co-operation.



**Please use this side if necessary for additional information**



